European University Institute
Department of History and Civilisation

# KULAK CHILDREN AND THE SOVIET STATE IN THE 1930S

By

Michael Kaznelson

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of
Doctor in History and Civilisation
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B/C →

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**Professor E.A. Rees, the EUI (Supervisor)**
**Professor Lynne Viola, the University of Toronto**
**Professor Jay Winter, the EUI**

To my wife and children with the warmest love

## Acknowledgements

The present work came about as a result of a personal crisis, which my wife and I underwent in May 1999. Our firstborn daughter, Dorothea, aged only 10 months, died, from a congenital disease. This experience influenced our perception of the "afterlife" tremendously. During that difficult period, I was writing my MA thesis at the Centre of Russian and East European studies at the University of Southern Denmark. My then supervisor, Professor Bent Jensen (who was in the midst of writing his award-winning book on the GULAG and oblivion) identified some potential in my work, and suggested that I undertook related research. I realised that this would be an obvious opportunity to combine our own personal tragedy with my professional skills. Although this thesis is not about our daughter, her sad fate inspired me when defining the scope. The thesis is my way to make clear to her and to our surroundings that, "you are not forgotten and never will be".

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# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| **batrak** | rural labourer, landless peasant |
| **bedniak** | poor peasant |
| **dekulakisation** | expropriation and repression of "kulaks" |
| **desiatin** | measure of land, equalling 1.09 hectare |
| **detkomissia** | detskaia komissia (children commission) |
| **fond** | archival file |
| **GULAG** | Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei (Main administration of Labour Camps) |
| **kolkhoz** | kollektivnoe khozyaistvo (collective farm) |
| **kolkhoznik** | male member of collective farm |
| **kolkhoztsentr** | Vserossiskii Sel'skokhozyaistvennykh Kolletivov (All-Russian Union of Agricultural Collectives) |
| **komsomol** | Kommunisticheskiy Soyuz Molodezhi (Communist League of Youth) |
| **komendatura** | Administrative organ of the special settlements |
| **krai** | territory |
| **kulak** | rich peasant exploiter |
| **MTS** | Mashino-traktornaya stantsiya (Machine tractor station) |
| **Narkom** | narodnyi komissar (people's commissar) |
| **NEP** | Novaya ekonomicheskaya politika (New Economic Policy) |
| **NKPros** | Narodnyi kommissariat prosveshcheniya (People's Commissariat of Education) |
| **NKVD** | Narodnyi kommissariat vnutrennikh del (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) |
| **NKZdrav** | Narodnyi kommissariat zdravookhraneniya (People's Commissariat of Health Authorities) |
| **NKZem** | Narodnyi kommissariat zemledeliya (People's Commissariat of Agriculture) |
| **oblast** | province |
| **obispolkom** | oblasnoi ispolnitel'nyi komitet (executive committee of the oblast' soviet) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **OGPU** | Ob''edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie (Unified State Political Administration of Political Police) |
| **otkhod** | seasonal or temporary labour migration for off-farm work |
| **Pioneer** | political scout movement |
| **podkulachniki** | kulak henchmen |
| **pud** | measure of weight, equalling 16.38 kg. |
| **raion** | district, administrative unit |
| **seredniak** | middle peasant |
| **sovkhoz** | sovetskoe khozyaistvo (state farm) |
| **sovnarkom (SNK)** | Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov (Council of People's Commissars) |
| **spetspereselenie** | spetsialnye pereselenie (special settlement/migration) |
| **spetspereselentsy** | official term for "kulak" deportees from 1929-1934 |
| **troika** | committee or group of three persons |
| **trudposelenie** | trudovoe poselenie (working settlement/migration) |
| **trudposelentsy** | official term for deportees from 1934-1944 |
| **VTsIK** | Vserossiskii Tsentral'nyi Ispolnitel'nyi Komitet (All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets) |
| **zazhitochnyi** | well-to-do peasant |

# 1. Introduction

*All of us, parents and children, experienced a bitter fate driven away from our house, loosing everything, being dekulakised and persecuted. Our life, our fate is the story of our country.*[1]

Almost immediately after the October Revolution in 1917 the Soviet state was on a collision course with Soviet agriculture. The conflict commenced with the swift and violent grain collection campaign in 1918, continued with the massive peasant uprising in 1921 and was severely radicalised during the forced collectivisation campaign of 1929-32/33. A common figure often emerging during these conflicts was the "kulak" (or rich peasant), whom the Soviet regime considered to be its worst enemy. Most of the public campaigns related to agriculture were directly or indirectly aimed at this particular category of the peasantry. Although the definition of the Soviet "kulak" (which meant "the fist") was flexible and only had limited correspondences with reality in the countryside, it dominated the public discourse throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The anti-kulak rhetoric drastically intensified during the collectivisation campaign, when on 30 January 1930 the regime resolved to deport those designated as the worst – that is *counterrevolutionary active kulaks* and *remaining elements of counterrevolutionary active* – to the various isolated areas of the Soviet Union. Thereafter, the physical removal of those peasants designated as kulaks (rich peasants), termed as *dekulakisation* (in Russian: *Раскулачевание*), commenced. The dekulakisation lasted from 1930 to 1932/33, and approximately 5.1-5.8 million people, adults and children, were removed from their villages of origin. Approximately 2 million of these were deported to either Northern Russia, Western Siberia, the Ural and Kazakhstan and resettled in what with an euphemism was called the special settlements (in Russian *spetspereselenie*). The remaining 2.5 million remained in the region of their origin, but were removed to the area outside the newly established collective farms.

Children younger than 15 years comprised almost 40% of all those dekulakised, despite the fact that the official campaign was aimed at the head of the family – the kulak. This may be related to the fact that almost 90% of the Russian peasant households were based on a non-wage family economy. When the Soviet state therefore decided in January 1930 to liquidate the kulak households, they inevitably decided also to deport the families of the kulaks. However, children

[1] Letter of rehabilitation written to the West Siberian authorities on 23 February 1995 by Maria Semenovna Mikheeva, GANO, Sh-65, 23.02-950.

were often invisible in various written accounts of the time, and when they did appear they remained secondary and passive. The Russian-born American journalist and writer, Maurice Hindus, visiting his native village during the commotion in 1930, overheard a passionate discussion between some local villagers and a communist activist who had been sent into the countryside by the regime. An elder villager initially asked: "*Kulaks, kulaks*...Have those *kulaks* no feelings, have they no love for their wives and children? Do *kulaks* enjoy seeing their dear ones fall sick and die?" The young activist responded:

> It is always the same...they see nothing but evil in everything the Soviet do. They can't get over the fate of the wives and children of the liquidated *kulaks*. Of course the women and children did suffer. I was myself a special constable and helped to "dekulakise" people. It was not a pleasant job. But neither is going to war and shooting and throwing bombs and thrusting a bayonet into another man's flesh, yet sometimes it has to be done. And this was war, and is war. The *kulaks* had to be got out of the way as completely as an enemy at the front. He is the enemy of the front. He is the enemy of the *kolkhoz* [collective farm], and where he could he struck at the *kolkhoz* with all his might; and that we just could not allow. And what pity did these same *kulaks* show to women and children when they had their bins loaded with rye and wheat and would let none of it go to the city, where there were people, millions of them, yes millions of women and children too, threatened with starvation?
>
> (source: Maurice Hindus, *Red Bread*, London 1931, pp. 174-175)

In the mind of the activist it was a battle between good and evil: the Soviet regime against a perceived enemy. It was "men" fighting "men" in a deadly combat for the universal goodness, which legitimised the means taken. This consequently caused a distinct indifference towards the repressed children, where the activists ignored the consequences of their actions. The suffering of women and children was a price which had to be paid in order to build socialism.

In the scholarly debate on the nature of dekulakisation, kulak children have generally occupied a minor place.[2] This was probably because the father of the household (the "kulak") was the

[2] It is, for example, noticeable that of the 40 volumes of the extensive scholarly documentary work undertaken in Russia "*Россия. XX век. Документы*" (in English: *Russia in the 20th century. Document*) only one volume covers

designated enemy of these campaigns and therefore easier to define as a victim. The neglect may also have been caused by the general attitude that children should be seen, but not heard – that is that evidently children suffered, but how they responded and what their experiences were was less important. Women and children have generally been "the forgotten victims", as their experiences have often been explained as a by-product of the repression of men. They were, from this perspective passive, as they became victims because of another policy. In recent research done on women as victims during the purges at the end of the 1930s, it has been shown that not only were they not passive, but that their experiences of the repression varied significantly from that of men.[3] Similar examination of the children as victims still remains to be undertaken, and Lynne Viola's paper "'Tear the Evil From the Roots: The Children of the Spetspereselentsy of the North," in Natalia Baschmakoff and Paul Fryer (eds.), "Modernisation of the Russian Provinces", special edition of *Studia Slavica Finlandensia*, volume XVII, Helsinki, 2000 is a pioneer work on this topic. Whereas we know quite a lot about the general processes of the anti-kulak campaigns, our knowledge about this ambiguity towards kulak children is more limited. This is one important reason for analysing the fate of kulak children. Another equally important reason is that kulak children add, as do women, a crucial aspect to our understanding of the nature of these anti-kulak processes – that of their experiences. The experiences of kulak children represented a diametric disparity with how childhood was officially portrayed in the Soviet Union. Whereas the official discourse spoke of a "happy childhood", these kulak children experience death, starvation and illness primarily caused by the political repression of themselves and their parents.[4] Caught in this deadlock a crucial question emerges: why were kulak children victimised and how did it affect them in the longer-term?

There have been various scholarly assessments of the fate of the kulak children; Robert Conquest, for example, states: "An economic class, such as the "kulaks", which the regime was about to crush, consists of children as well as adults."[5] Children from this perspective were class enemies like their parents, and as such would always be subjected to discrimination – that is they were passive and became victims because of the campaigns directed against their parents. Sheila Fitzpatrick has a somewhat different conclusion, acknowledging that kulak children were

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the fate of children – S.S. Vilenskii, A.I. Kokurin, G.V.Atmashkina, I.Iu. Novichenko (red.), *Дети ГУЛАГа 1918-1956*, Moskva 2002.

[3] Melanie Ilič, "The Forgotten 5 Per Cent: Women, Political Repression and the Purges" pp. 116-139 in Melanie Ilič (ed.), *Stalin's Terror Revisited*, London 2006.

[4] On this dilemma see Maria Belskaia's narrative, "Arina's Children" pp. 219-234 in Shiela Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, *Life Stories of Russian Women. From 1917 to the Second World War*, Princeton 2000, p. 223.

[5] Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror-Famine*, New York 1986, p. 284.

vulnerable during the dekulakisation, but that their position was never fixed. Basing her argument on Stalin's declaration in 1935 that "a son does not answer for his father"; she argues that even if kulak children were deported with their parents, attempts to rectify their situation were made by the mid-1930s.[6] Moreover she asserts: "Kulaks' children (in contrast to kulaks) had never been formally excluded from kolkhoz membership, so there was no moment when they were formally readmitted".[7] The conclusions of Conquest and Fitzpatrick are consequently different. We may, according to the first approach, argue that the Soviet government always had a merciless policy towards kulak children; however, the second proposal addresses the possibility that the regime had very different policies related to adults and children, and that this furthermore changed during the 1930s.

The core of the controversy fundamentally reflects different accounts of the nature of the Stalinist state. Why did the Soviet regime treat kulak children the way it did during the 1930s? How did the authorities relate themselves to this specific category of Soviet children? Was there one policy or several different policies, changing from one period to another? Were kulak children treated differently from their parents? Were kulak children passive, or did they react to the circumstances they were brought up under? And what was the long-term impact of exclusion on their fate? These questions largely outline the scope of the thesis, and signify the contribution of this project to the general research on Soviet history. This work studies a social group that has been neglected – a group that was particularly vulnerable, which was not able to organise itself, and which was not able to articulate its views. By analysing the fate of kulak children this thesis provides a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of victimisation in the Soviet Union.

## 1.1 Modernisation, modernity and Soviet "backwardness"

The years 1928-29 saw the introduction of what would become a massive transformation of Soviet society; through rapid industrialisation and comprehensive collectivisation of agriculture. Whilst all Soviet children,[8] and particularly children of poor- and middle peasants, undoubtedly were affected by this transformation, kulak children constituted a significant element of what

[6] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants. Resistance or Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization*, New York 1994, p. 240.
[7] Ibid., pp. 364-65 note 10.
[8] Children are generally overlooked in the discusion of the historical development of Russia and other Soviet societies. Catriona Kelly is still preparing her work on Soviet childhood, but has willingly presented chapters of it to the author at an earlier stage, for which he is grateful.

might be termed as victims of the Soviet model of modernisation. For this reason, this thesis concentrates on this particular group.

In order to understand the nature of the Soviet modernisation, it is necessary to introduce the historical background. Pre-revolutionary Russian society was primarily based on agriculture, and approximately 80% of the population lived in the countryside. Russian agriculture was characterised by serfdom until 1861, when the Tsarist government formally emancipated the peasants. The *mir* or peasant commune was still preserved, despite these agricultural reforms.[9] This was a collective organisation, which divided the land of the commune among the individual peasants; paid taxes to the state; conscripted young men to the army; and set up rules for social customs and moral standards. The mir owned the land of the commune, and annually distributed it in strips among its members. Under these circumstances some peasants were more influential than others. The individual members of the *mir* were bolshaki (administrators) rather than khoziain (owners). The bolshak did not own the land, but administrated different sections, scattered throughout the territory of the *mir*.[10] The old serf categories had also survived the reforms of 1861 and were used in official documents and as a term of definition as late as in the population census of 1897. Former serfs still had various obligations to landowners, financial as well as practical, which often placed them in a relationship of dependency.[11]

Peasant rebellions and Black Repartition occurred in the Russian countryside by 1904-05, and led to violent and illegal divisions of the property of the landowners and of the land of the peasants who attempted to free themselves from *mir* control. These types of events were repeated in 1917. The Tsarist Prime Minister, Pëtr Stolypin, was aware of the seriousness of this problem, when in 1906 he introduced further land reforms. His main ambition was to give peasants the legal right to possess property in land consolidated within one unit, and consequently to abandon the previous system of sectional divisions. Henceforth, the peasants were given the right to own units of land, which was a fundamental break from the previous structure of the *mir*. The aim was to transform the bolshak into a khozian, and subsequently to create a new class of yeoman

[9] Theodor Shanin, *Russia as a "Developing Society". The Roots of Otherness: Russia's Turn of Century. Volume 1*, London 1985, pp. 73-74 and Orlando Figes, Peasants Russia, *Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolutionary Russia (1917-1921)*, Oxford 1989, p. 9.
[10] Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War. The Volga Countryside in Revolution* (1917-1921), Oxford 1989, p. 13.
[11] Fitzpatrick 1994, p. 20 and Gatrell 1986, p. 73.

farmers. This was based on the theory that a capitalist oriented agricultural model could support the development of society much more efficiently.[12]

Leading Russian intellectuals, whether they were conservative or radical, considered agricultural society as "backward" and consequently advocated modernisation.[13] When the Bolsheviks took over in October 1917 they adopted this belief and decided that a transformation of society had to be achieved by massive state intervention.[14] Soviet modernisation was, in this context, equated with industrialisation – development could never become "progressive" until the new Soviet republic was transformed into an industrial society. There was an ongoing debate with in the Soviet leadership throughout the 1920s regarding the role of agriculture. In January 1923 Lenin talked about the importance of the cooperatives,[15] and Nikolai Bukharin would in 1925 (the year after Lenin died) go as far as to encourage the kulaks to enrich themselves. This suggests that there were alternatives to the repressive policy later introduced by the Soviet government.[16] In 1927/28, as a consequence of the grain crises, the Soviet state, however, prioritised rapid industrialisation, at the expense of agriculture. Consequently, the previous semi-liberal economic policy – the New Economic Policy or *NEP* (1921-27) – was abandoned, the preceding debate about the role of Soviet peasantry was coming to an end and the First Five Year Plan introduced in 1928.[17] An assault on the traditional Russian peasantry emerged due to this shift, and led to the forced collectivisation of agriculture from 1929-32/33. Although the agricultural market was never completely abolished during this campaign, the main ambition was to dissolve the private peasantry.[18] The official aim of the collectivisation campaign was to

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[12] Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy. The Russian Revolution 1891-1924*, London 1996, p. 99, Gatrell, 1986, p. 233 and Judith Pallot, *Land Reform in Russia, 1906-1917. Peasant Responses to Stolypin's Project of Rural Transformation*. Oxford 1999.

[13] Yanni Kotsonis, *Making Peasants Backward. Agricultural Cooperative and the Agrarian Question in Russia 1861-1914*, London 1999, p. 4.

[14] James W. Heinzen, *Inventing A Soviet Countryside. State Power and the Transformation of Rural Russia, 1917-1929*, Pittsburgh 2004, pp. 1-3.

[15] V.I. Lenin, "On Cooperation" pp. 209-216 in George Fyson (ed.), *Lenin's Final Fight. Speeches and Writing 1922-23*, New York 1995, pp. 209 and 211.

[16] For more on the "Bukharin Alternative" see: V.P. Danilov "Крестьянской хозяйство и кооперация в концепции А.В. Чаянова" in V.P. Danilov (ed.), *Человек и земля*, Moskva 1987, V.P. Danilov, "20-е годы: нэп и борьба альтернатив" in V.P. Danilov (ed.) *Историки спорят*, 1988 and V.P. Danilov, "Бухаринская альтернатива" in V.P. Danilov (ed.) *Бухарин: человек, политик, ученый*, Moskva 1990.

[17] Regarding NEP and the abandonment of it see: Mark Harrison, "Why was NEP Abandoned?" pp. 63-78 in Robert C. Stuart, *The Soviet Rural Economy*, New Jersey 1983, pp. 63-64 and 73-74, Iu. Goland, *Кризисы, разрушившие, НЕП*, Moscow, 1991 and V.P. Danilov, O.V. Khlevniuk, A.Iu. Vatlin (red.) *Как ломали НЕП: стенограммы пленумов ЦК ВКП (Б), 1928-1929 гг., том 5*, Moscow 2000.

[18] The *Kolkoz*-market enabled the peasants to sell their products and thus facilitated a semi-private sector both during and after the collectivisation campaign of 1929-32/33. See: Stephan Merl, "Bilanz der Unterwerfung – die soziale und ökonomische Reorganisation Des Dorfes" in Manfred Hildermeie (Hrsg.) *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkreig Neue Wege der Forschung*, München 1998.

channel resources from agriculture into the industrial sector, by binding the peasantry with strict grain quotas – grain was considered *the* resource which should be used to feed the proletariat of the cities and to secure foreign investment capital for the ongoing industrialisation.[19] Stalin's modernisation from 1929 onwards has generally been interpreted as the "second revolution" or "the revolution from above": a state transformation of society, with the purpose of establishing something "new" and desirable. Stephen Kotkin asserts: "Stalinism signified the advent of a specifically socialist civilization based on the rejection of capitalism..."[20] Part of this implied, as Kotkin indicates, the rejection of everything belonging to the past: the Tsarist court, the church, the *mir*, private entrepreneurs, private farming, traditional child rearing, and religion. These changes were undertaken as a revolution, with extremely radical methods – the past had to be swept away, in order to make room for a socialist society.

Soviet modernisation was explicitly characterised by state dominance, and its needs became much more important than that of society.[21] On an ideological level the Soviet project was carried through by a high level of deception: where the end would justify the means.[22] Obviously, the practical implementation often proved to be more complex than the ideological aim, but it was nonetheless an ambition to fundamentally change the structures of society and create a new socialist civilisation. The *crisis* of Soviet modernisation was that this attempt to create a "new" and different civilisation also produced a state of war between state and society.[23] The root of this can be detected in the ideological approach of the Soviet leadership to the "progressive modernisation". The Bolsheviks insisted on stratifying the peasantry according to social classes. Lenin explicitly spoke of rural labourers (batraki), poor peasants (bedniaki), middle peasants (seredniaki), well-to-do peasants (zazhitochnyi) and rich peasants (kulaki). Accordingly, the agricultural revolution had to be implemented as an alliance between the city proletariat and the poor and middle peasants. The adversaries in this transformation, consequently, were the kulaks, zazhitochnyi (well-to-do peasants) and so-called kulak henchmen (podkulachniki).

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[19] Regarding the debate on collectivisation and industrialisation see: R. W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia 1. The Socialist Offensive. The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture*, 1929-1930, London 1980, James Millar "Mass Collectivization and the Contribution of Soviet Agriculture to the First Five Year Plan" in Slavic Review, December 1974 pp. 750-66 and Alec Nove, *Was Stalin Really Necessary? Some Problems of Soviet Political Economy*, London 1965.

[20] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, London 1995, p. 2.

[21] Zygmunt Bauman, "The Party in the System-Management Phase: Change and Continuity" pp. 81-108 in Andrew C. Janos *Authoritarian Politics in Communist Europe. Uniformity and Diversity in One-Party States*, Berkley 1976, p. 99.

[22] E.A. Rees, *Political Thought from Machiavelli to Stalin. Revolutionary Machiavellism*, London 2004 p. 126.

[23] Oleg Khlevniuk, *Политбюро. Механизмы политической власти в 1930-е годы*, Moscow 1996, p. 17.

The Bolsheviks aimed to limit the economic, political and social influence of the kulaks in order to secure a basis for a socialist agriculture. The transformation of Soviet agriculture encountered great difficulties: firstly because the social re-construction of the countryside was much more complex than the class stratification allowed for; secondly because of the significant resistance of the peasantry towards the Bolshevik plan; and thirdly because the state had misunderstood the social stratification of the countryside. Instead of supporting the ongoing transformation of the Soviet countryside, the peasantry became increasingly alienated from it, leading to resistance, which often escalated into physical uprising.[24] The kulak children add an important dimension to this crisis, as they on the one hand were addressed as Soviet children in general, but on the other hand were the *strangers*: those who were neither friends nor enemies of Soviet modernisation. This implies that, that which was considered a progressive benefit for society involved numerous paradoxes; one of them being that children, who were supposed to live a "happy childhood" (*счастливое детство*)[25] were physically and forcefully excluded from society, because their parents were stigmatised as "kulaks".[26] It is this complexity surrounding the fate of kulak children that will be addressed.

### *1.1.1 Diseased power*

This thesis will discuss the more sinister legacies of modernisation in the Soviet context, rather than analysing its positive impact upon society. Michel Foucault in his theories on the relationship between subjectivity and power has advanced the term "diseased power".[27] This concept relates to these regimes, labelled as fascist and Stalinist, which emerged by the beginning of the 20th century. These regimes used and corrupted the instruments of the modern state – science, law and order, hygiene, organisation, aesthetics, discipline and efficiency. A classical example of such diseased power in a Soviet context was the censuses of 1937 and 1939. The Soviet regime undertook a census in 1926, and made projections for the demographic development of the following ten years – it aspired to foresee the demographic situation by 1936.

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[24] Silvana Malle, *The Economic Organization of War Communism 1918-1921*, Cambridge 1985, p. 365.
[25] Regarding the myth of "the happy childhood" see: Catriona Kelly "Uncle Stalin and Grandpa Lenin: Soviet Leader Cults for Little Children" pp. 102-122 in E.A. Rees o.a. (red.) *The Leadercult in Communist Dictatorship*, London 2004 and A.K. Sokolov (pred.red.), *Общество и власть 1930-е годы. Повествование в документах*, Moscow 1998, p. 299.
[26] T.M. Smirnova, "«В происхождении своем никто не повинен...»? Проблемы интиграции детей «социально чудежных элементов» в послереволюционное российское общество (1917-1936 гг.)" pp. 28-42 i *Отечественная*
*История*, July/August 2003, Number 4.
[27] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and the Power" pp. 326-348 in James D. Faubion, *Michel Foucault. Power. The essential works 3*, London 1994, p. 328.

In 1937 another census was undertaken, which revealed a dramatically and unexpected demographic drop – primarily caused by the devastating famine of 1932/33. Because of this, the 1937 census was suppressed, its compilers arrested, and another census, corresponding to the official view, was completed in 1939. The "statistic" is a modern invention,[28] and the Soviet state aimed to describe itself as modern by fixing the censuses. The Soviet state was not ready to accept the premise of modernity: it was not ready to publicly express itself in a modern manner.

Another example of the "diseased power" was the way the regime divided the population into "friends" and "enemies". Society was separated into a binary state of normality and abnormality – the abnormal can, according to Zygmunt Bauman, also be seen as the "other".[29] The Soviet regime was obsessed by such separation of its population almost immediately after the October Revolution, when it defined *vragi narodov* (enemies of the people), *byvshii liudi* (former people), NEP-men, kulaks etc., and at the same time detected certain allies within society. The German philosopher, Carl Schmitt, argued that this dichotomy was fundamental to the political construction of the modern state; Schmitt's concept of friends are trustworthy heroes, like the proletariat and poor peasants (in the Soviet context), which were expected to support the revolution. Enemies (or in this case kulaks) were expected to oppose it, and should as such be excluded and even liquidated as a class if necessary.[30] Zygmunt Bauman has consequently argued: "Classifying consists in the act of inclusion and exclusion ".[31] That classification may lead to exclusion emphasises that the mechanisms of the modern state also have a distinct possibility of separating and discriminating unwanted elements – and this may be seen as the core of the "diseased power".

The "diseased power" often affected denial, because such large scale discrimination had a severe impact on the society being subjected to it: some citizens participated in the exclusion of others, which, of course, had a tremendous psychological impact.[32] Denial worked on both an individual level – that is ordinary citizens claimed not to know anything about what had happened – and on a political – it was an integrated part of the state ideology to repress any condemnation of this exclusion. The latter has great significance for this thesis, as the Soviet

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[28] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality" pp. 87-104 in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.) *The Foucault Effect*, London 1991 p. 99.
[29] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge 1991, p. 2.
[30] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (translated by George Schwab), Chicago 1996, p. 26.
[31] Bauman, 1991, p. 2.
[32] Both Germany and Russia (and other post-Soviet societies) had/have immense difficulties in coming to terms with their "diseased" past. See Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, "Introduction: The regimes and their dictators: perspectives of comparison" pp. 1-25 in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin (eds.) *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, Cambridge 1997, p. 5.

state suppressed knowledge about catastrophic events, re-wrote history and described modernisation as a progressive breakthrough and necessary leap forward. The best known example of this is, of course, the death of at least 5.7 million Soviet citizens during the famine of 1932/33 – the Soviet regime completely denied and ignored this. Instead, in January 1934 it celebrated its own achievement of the preceding five years during the Congress of Victors. The political denial of the famine remained a reality in the Soviet Union until the 1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary – although he, of course, never denounced the collectivisation campaign which led to the famine.[33]

Stanley Cohen advances the concept of "state of denial", which is tremendously useful for the project, as it both refers to a political and an emotional state. He talks of personal, official and cultural denial, implying that the suppression works at both a micro-level – within every individual, in every family and in every local community, but also at a macro-level – within government policy and in re-writing history.[34] "Denial" is relevant for the analysis of how the kulak children coped with the situation they were placed in; the problem of identity, their attitudes to their families, their attitudes to the authorities. That is how a person being situated in an emotional state of denial constructs its subjectivity during and after the political exclusion of society. Also the concept has importance for the understanding how the diseased Soviet power engaged in the suppression of information regarding the fate of this group, the way in which the history of the past was concealed, the way in which official memory erased the kulak children from the record. The fate of kulak children is therefore significant for a wider understanding of the long-term effect of dekulakisation on Soviet society.

The state of denial can either be conscious (that is the subject deliberately refuses to acknowledge the event) or unconscious (as a psychological defence mechanism).[35] It is, furthermore, important that denial either is *literal*, meaning that nobody speaks of an event (the famine was, for example, literally denied); *interpretive*, implying that the significance of an event is downgraded (people were deported, starved and subsequently died, but this was a necessary part of the attempt to modernise a backward peasant economy); or *implicatory*, signifying that a person witnesses an assault but refuses to take any responsibility to intervene (people see what happens, but do not act).[36] The subject occupies different roles: either as victim, perpetrator or onlooker. Naturally, each experience of an event is different, not the least because

[33] Catherine Marridale, *Night of Stone. Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia,* 2001.
[34] Stanley Cohen, *State of Denial. Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 10-11.
[35] Ibid., pp. 3-6.
[36] Ibid., pp. 7-9.

their moral options are different. A victim usually denies an event, because he or she has been subjected to a traumatic dehumanisation; the perpetrator does it, because he or she has crossed the moral line between respecting and dehumanising others; and the onlooker is confronted with the dilemma of either reacting or ignoring the event they have witnessed.[37] This scenario is crucially important for the analysis of the fate of kulak children, as they grew up in a "diseased" Soviet society, permeated by ideological denial.

### *1.1.2 Different comprehension of Soviet history*

The nature of the diseased Soviet power has caused great scholarly discussions, which is related to the role of ideology and circumstances. Scholars working on Soviet history can roughly be divided into three schools: the totalitarian, non-totalitarian and revisionist.[38] Both the totalitarian and non-totalitarian schools emerged in the 1950s and 60s in the wake of the Second World War, and the scholarly debate addresses the nature of the Soviet state. The arguments focused on whether the development of the Soviet Union was a "top-down" process – "revolution from above" – or whether social pressure from below forced the regime in a certain direction.

Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski both argued (from the totalitarian standpoint) that the most important element of the totalitarian dictatorship was the primacy of ideology and psychology and the aims and methods of the dictator. The Fascist and Communist dictatorships were, from this perspective, generally similar on six fundamental points: They both had 1) an official dominating ideology; 2) a single mass party typically led by one man, the "dictator"; 3) a system of terrorising police control directed against internal "enemies"; 4) a technologically conditioned near-complete monopoly of mass communication; 5) a similar technological near-complete monopoly of all means of armed combat; and 6) central control of the entire economy.[39] The near-complete power was concentrated in the role of the dictator, whose intention defined the daily life of citizens living in the country. The non-totalitarian approach, whose major representatives with regards to Soviet history were E.H. Carr, Isaac Deutcher and Moshe Lewin, rejected this "near-complete control" of power and argued that the system was more complex. Instead of examining the intentions of the Soviet government, they emphasised

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[37] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[38] For example of this scholarly disagreement on the nature of the Soviet Union see; Richard Pipes, *The formation of the Soviet Union: communism and nationalism, 1917-1923*, Cambridge Mass 1997, Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror*, London 1990, J. Arch. Getty *Origin of the Great Purge*, Cambridge 1985 and Robert Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia 1934-1941*, Binghamton, New York 1996.

[39] Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, New York 1964, p. 3, p. 5 and pp. 9-10.

the circumstance in which this regime emerged. Without rejecting the centrality of the state's role, their emphasis was on the economic, social, cultural and international pressure shaping the policy of the Soviet regime.[40] The main difference between these two schools is whether the emphasis should be on intention or structure: Was the political terror an outcome of the intention of the Soviet state, or did it rise from structural tension in society? In the 1980s, what Sheila Fitzpatrick has termed as the "revisionist" school emerged as a reaction to primarily the "totalitarian" approach.[41] The revisionists suggested that a high degree of decentralisation occurred in the decision-making, where interest groups, local leaders and ordinary people influenced the development of the state policy. In contrast to the totalitarian school the revisionists strove to explain the development of the 1930s as an outcome of social pressure within society according to which the Stalinist leadership responded.[42]

Regarding the mechanism of dekulakisation and the fate of kulak children this scholarly debate can be reproduced as a matter of whether the Soviet government deliberately attacked the kulaks and their children as part of a master plan to repress them, as Conquest suggested above, or if they lost control during the initial phase of expropriation and deportation in 1929, as Fitzpatrick would imply. It is evident, as John Keep has asserted, that "If the dreaded "T-word" ["totalitarianism" MK] still has adherents outside academia, this may be because there is something to be said after all for using it, provided that it can be freed from politically prejudiced association".[43] The argument is that instead of blindly supporting one school, and by that rejecting the other two completely, the three different approaches will be used critically. The Soviet system aspired to being "totalitarian" in its institutional construction, yet society did react to the policy being implemented. Hence, the latter was anything but passive, in its relations to the dominant Soviet state. There was a conflict between different institutions and the various levels of the Soviet command structure. Also, the Soviet government had to consider the problem of non-implementation (that is that the local authorities did not follow orders), and a high amount of ideological zeal of local officials – often radicalising the initial orders.

The present work thus strives to combine these traditions, and thereby address this fundamental debate from an alternative perspective. The point of departure is social and cultural history, as

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[40] E.A. Rees, *Stalinism and Soviet Rail Transport, 1928-41*, London 1885, p. 2.
[41] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "New Perspectives on Stalinism" in *Russian Review* 45 (1986).
[42] J. Arch. Getty, *Origins of the Great Purge. The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered 1933-1938*, Cambridge 1985, p. 11.
[43] John Keep, "Recent western views of Stalin's Russia: Social and Cultural aspects" pp. 149-166 in Harold Shukman (ed.) *Redefining Stalinism*, London 2003, pp. 159-60.

the thesis will analyse the social dynamics in Soviet society and consequently discuss the difficulties of categorising the different groups comprising this society. Yet the scope will also widen the discussion, and reflect upon the consequences of the diseased power – it will be an examination of how state policy affected a specific social group, which per definition was weak. Hence the work will be based on a combination of circumstantial and intentional arguments, showing that political repression and its affect on ordinary human beings is complex.

## 1.2 Sources

One of the limits for this research project has been that it was difficult to find primary sources, as individual archival documents specifically covering the fate of kulak children are rare. The sources that do exist are of a different character, either related directly to the fate of kulak children, or to the general context, the massive transformation of Soviet society during the 1930s. The primary sources were collected from three different archives in Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kiev. The reason for using these archives is that they cover either the places where kulak children originated or the regions whereto they were deported. The documents collected in Kiev were found in the Central State Archives of Social Organisations of Ukraine (TsDAGO). The material belongs to the archival file (in Russian *fond*) no. 1 of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party (CK KP (b) U) and mainly consists of correspondences between high-level officials within the party regarding the situation of the 1930s in general, and kulak children in particular. The latter addresses partially the political organisation of these children and their education. It also reveals the position of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party (CK KP (b) U) in relation to the development of Ukrainian orphanages during the 1930s, to the intensification of different epidemics in the mid-1930s and the rise in infant mortality. These issues, related to the topic of living conditions of kulak children, are, however, covered more thoroughly in the material obtained in both the State Archive of Novosibirsk Oblast (GANO) and the State Archives of Tomsk Oblast (GATO). Tomsk Oblast was one of the main regions for the constructions of special settlements[44] hence these archives contain a lot of information regarding orphan kulak children, their education and living conditions in deportation. The files used in GANO were no. 895 (the Children commission of the Novosibirsk oblast) and no. 61 (the educational authorities of Western Siberia). In GATO the documents found belong to files no. 43 (department of education in Narym), no. 590 (health authorities of

[44] The village-like installations of deported kulaks and their families.

Narym), no. 591 (department of education in Narym) and no. 1993 ("the file on memory on repression of collectivisation").

The GATO file no. 1993 belongs to a body of sources, which deal with the experiences of deported kulak children. This file contains memoirs written by kulak children during the 1990s, and collected by the local section of the nationwide Russian commemoration organisation *Memorial* in Tomsk. *Memorial* has also located the photographic material used in this thesis, which are stored in the same file in GATO as the written memoirs. A similar source, found in GANO, are the letters of rehabilitation written to the local authorities of Novosibirsk in the early 1990s. These letters officially belong to the director of the archive, however, they came to my attention during a research trip in August 2003 to GANO. The author will therefore refer to them as if they belonged to collection of GANO – although they do not officially belong to any of its files. The letters are dated from the beginning of the 1990s, when the government of the Russian Federation decided to rehabilitate all victims of the Stalinist repression. Thus many former repressed, and their relatives, wrote to local authorities in order to achieve political rehabilitation and a claim of economic compensation – which, of course, was much more difficult to meet for the Russian authorities. These letters unravels the fate of the writer, and are therefore useful for the establishment of what happened to them. A third, and even more important source in this particular category, is the interview material. I was able to meet with ten former kulaks and kulak children in Novosibirsk in the period from 16 August to 6 September 2003. Interviews are difficult to work with, because events and details tend to be forgotten. Whilst the sources are problematic regarding factual events, individual testimonies remain an important resource for considering the psychological impact of, for example, the dekulakisation on its victims – and the interviews are, of course, significant for our analysis of the experiences of kulak children.

With regard to the sources a tremendous amount of material is accessible in published volumes and articles like S.S. Vilenskii et.al. *Дети ГУЛАГа. 1918-1956*[45]; Viktor Danilov et. al. *Трагедия Советской деревни*[46]; Viktor Danilov and Sergei Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в западной Сибири*[47]; V.I. Markov and B.P. Trepin, *Из истории земли Томской*[48]; Viktor Danilov and A. Berelowitch, et. al., *Советская деревня глазами ВЧК – ОГПУ – НКВД*, 1918-1939[49] and the highly informative article by G.M. Abidekov on the situation of the kulaks in

[45] Russian title translated to English: *Children of GULAG.*
[46] Russian title translated to English: *The Tragedy of the Soviet Village.*
[47] Russian title translated to English: *Special settlers in Western Siberia.*
[48] Russian title translated to English: *From the history of the land of Tomsk.*
[49] Russian title translated to English: *The Soviet countryside in the eyes of VChK – OGPU – NKVD.*

deportation, «Спецпереселенцы – жертвы «сплошной коллективизации». Из документов «особой папки» Политбюро ЦК ВКП (б)[50]. What these volumes and articles have in common is that they are thoroughly edited, extremely ambitious and very extensive in their scope. The collection *Дети ГУЛАГа. 1918-1956* is especially significant in the forthcoming analysis, since it particularly covers the fate of enemy children.

The evaluation of the primary sources needs to be done on the basis of secondary literature related to the development of the Soviet Union during the 1930s. Very little has, as already stated, been written about kulak children specifically. The present thesis seeks to widen Viola's approach by focusing on kulak children from a more general point of view – that is the fate of the kulak children before, during and after the deportation. The Russian language article of T.M. Smirnova, "«В происхождении своем никто не повинен...»? Проблемы интиграции детей «социально чудежных элементов» в послереволюционное российское общество (1917-1936 гг.)"[51] has useful and important information on this topic. It is of a more general nature than Viola's article and it discusses the fate of enemy children, and addresses important issues regarding the definition of them. Other useful material, such as Catriona Kelly's, *Pavlik Morozov. The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero,* has recently been published. Although this book primarily aims to present the story about the boy behind the myth of Pavlik Morozov, and thus only discuses the problems of kulak children in the 1930s on a more secondary level, it is of great interest: the myth of Pavlik Morozov is about the boy who denounced his own father as a kulak. Thus, the political construction of kulak children can be deducted from this particular myth. The book is largely an attempt to widen and correct the scope of Iurii Druzhnikov, *Вознесение Павлика Морозова.* The responses of kulak children to the myth of Morozov, is elaborated upon in Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931-1939)".

From a more general perspective, there is a growing body of publication on collectivisation and the dekulakisation campaign. Nikolai Ivnitskii's two books, *Коллективизация и Раскулачивание (начало 30-х годов)*[52] and *Репрессивная Политика Советской Власти в Деревне*[53] are classic standard works. A third important book in Russian is Sergei Krasilnikov's,

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[50] Russian title translated to English: "*Special settlers – victims of "mass collectivisation". From the documents "special files" of the Politburo CK VKP (b)".*

[51] Russian title translated to English: "Is nobody to blame for its background...."? Problems with integration of children of "socially strange elements" in Post-revolutionary Russian society (1917-1936)".

[52] Russian title translated to English: *Collectivisation and dekulakisation (at the beginning of the 1930's).*

[53] Russian title translated to English: *Repressive policy of the Soviet power in the countryside.*

*Серп и молох. Крестьянская ссылка в западной Сибири в 1930-е годы,*[54] which is essential reading, since it discusses important topics related to kulak children. Vladimir Zemskov's, *Спецпоселенцы в СССР 1930-1960,*[55] has a substantial number of statistics regarding the development within these settlements and is crucial for our investigation of the number of kulak children.

In Western historiography on the Soviet Union, a very important work is R.W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger. Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933* which is, perhaps one of the most well documented and complete volumes on the famine year of 1932-33. The following works will also be used: Andrea Graziosi's three books *Guerra e rivoluzione in Europa*, *The Great Soviet Peasant War* and *Stato e Industria in Unione Sovietica*; Lynne Viola's two books *Peasant Rebels under Stalin* and *The Best Sons of the Fatherland*; Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Stalin's Peasants*; Stefan Merl, *Bauern unter Stalin*; Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow*; James Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation*; R.W. Davies' *Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930*; Moshe Lewin's *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power* and Merl Fainsod's *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*. While the work of Conquest and Fitzpatrick has important sections on the kulak children, these books serve more as sources to the general context of the 1930s; the industrialisation, collectivisation, peasant resistance, dekulakisation and everyday life.

### *1.2.1 Procedure*

The thesis is organised into 7 chapters: Chapter 1 and 2 constitute the background and the contextualisation of the scope. Chapter 1, the introduction, consists of a definition of the scope and a discussion of the method and the material used. Chapter 2 elaborates on the construction of the Soviet kulak and discusses the nature of the dekulakisation. This chapter also considers the situation of kulak children during the initial phases of this anti-kulak campaign.

The core of the thesis is found in the Chapter 3-6. Chapter 3 addresses the discussion on the political culture of the Soviet Union, with an examination of the relationship between the Soviet regime and the kulak children during the 1930s. The chapter will examine the ambiguity in the Soviet policy towards the kulak children throughout the 1930s, and also it will discuss how the kulak children responded to it. Chapter 4 analyses the living condition of kulak children in their

[54] Russian title translated to English *Sickle and Moloch (The Peasant deportation in West Siberian during the 1930s).*

[55] Russian title translated to English: *Special Settlers in USSR 1930-1960.*

places of origin and in deportation. This chapter opens the discussion on the experiences of kulak children during the 1930s. The questions addressed are the demographic development of the 1930s, with a specific emphasis on the number of kulak children, their living conditions in deportation and the way the authorities related themselves to these problems. Chapter 5 follows the discussion on the experiences by examining the definition of kulak children, and studies the educational policy, political manipulation and propaganda directed against them. The discussion approaches the matter of whether a class, like Conquest asserts, consisted of both children and adults, or if they were, as Fitzpatrick suggests, defined differently. It considers whether kulak children were enemies or friends or neither. Chapter 6 moves to the 1990s and the year 2003, following kulak children into their old age and how they remember their experiences as children of social outcast and what this tells us about the nature of the relationship between kulak children, their parents and the Soviet authorities during the 1930s. Chapter 6 will be based on the interviews conducted by the present author and the written accounts collected by Memorial in Tomsk. The chapters are discussed in the concluding chapter 7, which considers the central question of this thesis: why were kulak children victimised and how did it affect them?

# 2. The construction of the Soviet kulak

The fate of kulak children was closely connected to that of their parents. Children would not have been deported (and dehumanised) if the Soviet regime had not decided to liquidate the kulak as a class on 30 January 1930. To understand the significance of this, it is necessary to discuss the nature of the dekulakisation. When it was decided that the New Economic Policy or NEP should be abandoned in 1927/28, and that the massive industrialisation drive should be launched, the Soviet government revised its policy towards kulaks. It is unclear as to who the kulak group actually was. We will now address the question of this chapter, which is related to the debate connected to nature of the kulak and consequently also the nature of dekulakisation.

## 2.1 The definition of Soviet Peasantry

### *2.1.1 The political definition of Russian capitalism*

The "kulak" was not a Bolshevik invention, but existed in the pre-revolutionary Russian terminology. Feodor Dostoevsky, for example, wrote in his diary entry of 1873:

> Genuine, sound capital accumulates in a country in no other way than by being based upon a general labour prosperity; otherwise only capital owned by kulaks and Jews can come into existence. And this it shall be if the people will not come to their senses and the intelligentsia will not help them. [...] there will be merely uniformly equal paupers, mortgaged and enslaved as a whole commune, while, in their stead, Jews and kulaks will be providing the money for the budget. There will emerge petty, depraved and mean little bourgeois, and a countless number of paupers enslaved by them – such will be the picture!
>
> (Source: Feodor Dostoevsky, *Полное собрание сочинении в тридцати томах, том* , Leningrad 1973 p. 95)

For Dostoevsky both the Jews and kulaks were parasites which threatened the healthy soul of the Russian peasantry. The kulak was a "*мироед*" or "village eater" who, by speculating in grain, usury and exploitation of the peasantry, turned the countryside into a depraved, starved and exploited entity. The pre-revolutionary kulak would often be a moneylender, sub-letter of land and middle-man between the peasantry and their customers in the larger cities. Therefore, the peasantry would both depend on these "kulaks", but also – like in the case of the Jews (who likewise served as the

middle-man in agricultural trading) – consider them to be exploitative and undesirable (especially in times of crises, when the harvest had failed, the taxes had to be paid or the livestock to be replaced).[1] An entrepreneur was, however, not a "kulak", since he often belonged to the complex peasant structure – or he was not considered to be someone working against the commune.[2] The pre-revolutionary "kulak" rarely belonged to the social structure of the village, and was, like the Jew, considered an *outsider*. Teodor Shanin finds that the pre-revolutionary "kulak" was the "not quite peasant" – he may have lived in the countryside, but he was not member of the *mir*.[3]

The Russian Social Democrats – out of which the Bolsheviks originated in 1903[4] – were faced with a dilemma when it came to the question on the role of agriculture in a post-revolutionary society. According to Marxism two opposed social classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, were engaged in class struggle leading to a development from capitalism to socialism to Communism. Although it could be argued that Marxism is much more than the class struggle, the dialectic of such struggle is important for our understanding of the course of events in the Soviet Union. One problem for Lenin and his colleagues, who led the revolution in October 1917, was the fact that almost 80% of the pre-revolutionary Russian population lived in the countryside, and were employed in agriculture. The peasantry differed from the two main class categories – the proletariat and bourgeoisie – and was seen as a sign of pre-capitalism and backwardness.[5]

Lenin himself knew that it was necessary to win over at least part of the peasantry, if the revolution should succeed in Russia. He divided it into different social strata: where some would be considered as allies and others were *enemies*. In his writing on the development of capitalism in Russia in the 1890s, Lenin argued that the peasantry was completely subordinated to the market. A social differentiation existed according to this argument, and was termed as a process of "depeasentation", where the old production forms and social relations were replaced by "[...] *new types* of inhabitants". Lenin divided the new types of inhabitants into two larger groups: the well-to-do rural bourgeoisie and the allotment owning wage-working rural proletariat.[6] The rural proletariat was, according to this assumption, threatened by the well-to-do farming oriented peasants and it was a permanent and progressing phenomenon in the Russian peasantry. This was the dialectic core

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[1] Peter Gatrell, *The Tsarist Economy 1850-1917*, London 1986, p. 73.
[2] Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy. The Russian Revolution 1891-1924*, London 1996, p. 91 footnote.
[3] Teodor Shanin, *Russia, 1905-07. Revolution as a Moment of Truth. The Roots of Otherness: Russia's Turn of Century.* Volume 2, London 1986, p. 123 and p. 172.
[4] Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (2nd edition), London 1975, p. 53.
[5] E.H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia. Socialism in one Country 1924-1926, volume 1*, (first published in 1958), London 1970, pp. 104-107.
[6] V.I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Moscow 1977 (Fifth edition in English), pp.179-180.

of the Russian class struggle: some peasants dominated the market, and others were subordinated to their control. Lenin argued that the rural bourgeoisie class comprised 20% of the total peasantry, and dominated the economic development of the Russian countryside.[7]

A development towards capitalist farming had occurred in some areas of the country by the turn of the 20th century. Peter Gatrell points to the position of grain farming in the Northern Caucasus, dairy farming in the Baltic, grain and sugar production in Ukraine and the development of the Black Earth region – which clearly indicates that part of Russian agriculture was developing towards a more market-oriented economy by the beginning of the century.[8] If we examine the development of Siberian agriculture we also find that, from 1903 to the First World War, it became competitive and it exported a substantial amount of butter and grain.[9] The development in Siberia may have been an exception, as this region had never experienced serfdom. Siberia was not, however, the only region experiencing this progressive development.

When Lenin and the Bolshevik's seized power in October 1917 the above debate became increasingly important. Although more than 20 years had past since Lenin wrote about the development of capitalism in Russia, the division of the peasantry into certain groups appears to have been immensely important. Lenin had in the intervening period refined his class division of the peasantry, and divided it into five strata: the landless rural labourers (batraki), the poor peasants (bedniaki), the middle peasants (seredniaki), the well-to-do peasants (zashitochnyi) and the rich peasants (kulaki). The poor peasants and batraki automatically became allies of the revolution, whereas the kulaks and zashitochnyi were considered to be enemies. The middle peasants, or the petty bourgeoisie of the countryside, were difficult to place, but it would be possible to include them as allies of the revolution as well – although this was not very clear by 1918, when the Bolshevik also attacked them during the swift and violent grain collection campaign.[10] It was the ambition to mobilise the poor peasants against the more prosperous kulaks, and to stimulate the revolution as a social pressure from 'below'.[11] By 1918 nearly 140,000 committees of village poor, or *kombedy*, had been established and inside the Bolshevik party 7,370 peasant cells were created.[12] The *kombedy* were extremely unpopular among the rural population, and were abolished in Russia

[7] Ibid., pp. 184-190.
[8] Gatrell, 1986, pp. 101-103 and p. 113 ff.
[9] Inge Marie Larsen, *Kampen om det sibirske smør. Kurgan, St. Petersborg, København, London. 1895-1905* (unpublished PhD. thesis submitted at the University of Southern Denmark in 2001), pp. 305-306.
[10] Robert Service, *Lenin. A Political Life. Volume 3. The Iron Ring*, London 1995, p. 53.
[11] Nikolai Ivnitskii, *Классовая Борьба в Деревне и Ликвидации кулачества как класса*, Moscow 1972 p. 8.
[12] Service 1995, p. 53.

by the beginning of the 1920s.[13] However, they survived until the forced collectivisation of 1929 in Ukraine. In 1918 the kombedy were considered the instruments whereby the Bolsheviks could implement their revolution in the countryside.

The Soviet kulak was, in this context, conceived as essential in this mobilisation of the poor peasantry. The Bolsheviks clearly leaned against Dostoevsky's aforementioned definition, by asserting that he was an exploiter, a usurer, a grain speculator and a parasite enslaving the peasant commune. However, the kulak not only exploited the peasantry, but also constituted a threat to the proletariat and the Soviet state. Lenin declared in August 1918:

> Kulaks madly detest the Soviet power and are ready to strangle, to shred up hundreds of thousands of workers...Kulaks are the most animalistic, the most brutal, the wildest exploiters...These bloodsuckers became rich during the war at the expense of the people...These spiders became fat at the expense of the peasants, who were impoverished by the war, and at the expense of the hungry workers. These bloodsuckers have been drinking the blood of workers and became rich while the workers were starving in the cities and in the factories. These vampires have been taking and continue to take the land of the landowners, and make the poor peasants their slaves. Onwards in a merciless battle against these kulaks! Death to them!
>
> (source: Vasilii Novokshonov, *В тридцаты – комендатурские.(очерки по истории тегульдетского район)*, с. Тегульдет 1993, pp. 4-5. My translation into English MK.)

It is possible that Lenin's outburst was a reaction to the crisis following the October revolution. Vladimir Brovkin asserts that a change occurred when the Bolsheviks gained power – with the result that they became more aggressive.[14] Maxim Gorky's view on the Russian peasantry at least underwent a remarkable transformation. In 1907 he argued: "The Russian peasant is willing, skilful, intelligent. He reads, ponders, works. The Revolution will be his, the liberation will come from him". In 1921, however, he expressed a completely different view in the *Daily News*, when he asserted: "Our peasants are ignorant, brutal, cowardly, inhuman. I hate them".[15] We have no explanation for Gorky's change of attitude. However, it is likely that the bloody conflict with the peasantry from 1918-21 could have had an effect upon his perception. The Bolsheviks were suspicious of the peasantry in general (and the kulaks in particular) because of the violent peasant

[13] Bent Jensen, *GULAG og Glemsel*, København 2002, p. 52 and p. 66.
[14] Vladimir Brovkin, *Russia after Lenin. Politics, Culture and Society, 1921-1929*, London 1998.
[15] Ugo Ojetti, *As They Seemed to Me*, London 1928 p. 95.

uprising. This was despite the official policy of an alliance between the city proletariat and the poor peasants. Hence the Soviet regime strove to define the "kulak" as an outsider, a marginalised minority, and an alien, who was conceived of as a parasite and physically assaulted in times of crises. But, who was the Soviet kulak? Was he really as dominating as Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued?

### *2.1.2 Post-revolutionary academic debate*

The question of the nature of the kulak preoccupied Soviet academics working on agriculture throughout the 1920s in the tense debate on the mechanisms of the Russian peasantry. One argument to be established was that Soviet agriculture was a peasant and not a farming agriculture – the differentiation is among other things related to the role of the market. In a market economy, the market determines the production and the demands of the consumers are consequently essential, as they guarantee capital for further investments. The peasantry, however, primarily produces according to the needs of the family and local community, and the market plays no decisive role, although obviously money is of importance.[16] According to the Russian rural sociologist, Aleksandr Chayanov, 90% of Russian agriculture was a non-wage family economy.[17] Money was naturally spent to buy new machines or animals, but an economic accumulation, like that in Western Europe, never appeared in Russia, he argued.[18] He asserted that the family was the organisational basis of Russian peasantry, since the strategies and possibilities of the household largely depended on its composition – that is the proportion of females and males; the number of healthy and sick members; numbers of children, adolescents, adults and elders. A large family was given more land by the commune, and the working staff would consequently be more extensive, as there were more people available. If the family was small, it had fewer possibilities, given that it had less cultivated land and fewer members.[19] Such procedures were possible due to the nature of Russian agriculture – the cultivated land would undergo a periodic partition, where the commune owned the land and divided

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[16] R.E.F. Smith, "Farms and Farmers" in R.W. Davies (ed.) *The Soviet Union. Second Edition.* London 1989 p. 119.

[17] A. V. Chayanov (1888 – ca. 1938) worked on the Russian peasant economy, and consequently on the construction of the peasantry. He was employed as an agronomist within the People's Commissariat of agriculture of RSFSR during the 1920s. He was arrested in 1929, sentenced in 1932 and later shot in approximately 1938. His contributions would be: A.V. Chayanov "On the Theory of Non- Capitalist Economic Systems" pp. 1-28 in Daniel Thorner, Basile Kerblay and R.E.F Smith, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, Homewood, Illinois 1966(a), and A.V. Chayanov "Peasant Farm Organization" Moscow 1925, (published and translated) in Daniel Thorner, Basile Kerblay and R.E.F Smith, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, Homewood, Illinois 1966 (b). *The Theory of Peasant Economy* was reprinted in 1986 with an introduction by Teodor Shanin.

[18] Chayanov 1966 (a) p. 1 and Chayanov 1966 (b) p. 47, p. 53 and p. 112.

[19] Teodor Shanin, *Russia as a "Developing Country". The Roots of Otherness: Russia's turn of century. Volume 1,* London 1985, p. 66 ff.

it into strips and distributed it among the peasant members. A peasant therefore did not posses one piece of land, on which he acted as a sovereign holder, but rather administrated several strips.

Chayanov distinguished the capability of the peasantry according to the following three parameters: firstly, the amount of land for use, since it indicated the actual possibilities of a single family; secondly, the size of the working family or the number of individuals in a family participating in the daily work; and thirdly, the extent of its demands, such as the size of the family and its composition. To these factors Chayanov adds migration of the family, which was an increasingly significant issue in the light of the extensive urbanisation in Russia from the turn of the century. If members of the family, and especially those capable of performing physical hard work, moved from the village to the cities, their families would lose valuable work power, which again meant that the families had fewer possibilities in household management. This meant that the mobility of the peasant household and the density and fertility of the family and local community, were of great significance in management of the non-wage family economy.[20]

Chayanov's theory can be summed up in the term *demographic distinction*, indicating that the possibilities of the individual peasants depended on the current demographic situation of the local community in general, and the family in particular. The Russian peasantry was never static but organic, and its possibilities, strategies and needs changed over time. A rich peasant could subsequently fall to the status of a poor peasant if the composition of his household somehow changed negatively, which implied a lowering of the working force and also of the quantity of cultivated land. A poor peasant could likewise become a rich peasant, if the demographic development was positive. Chayanov therefore rejected the Marxist distinctions of social classes in his definition of the Russian peasantry, as he thought that the internal relation of the local community in general (and the family in particular) minimised such socio-economic differences.[21] The Russian peasantry would be sympathetic to its community and family, and any threats, jeopardising the daily order, would usually be considered as something originating from "outside" – for example the intellectual elite of the city, who did not understand the organic cosmos of the village.

The Agrarian Marxists, especially the academic L.M. Kritsman, rejected Chayanov's position. They believed that the Russian peasantry was divided into distinct social stratums, giving some more possibilities than others. Some owned the means of productions, and reduced others to an

[20] Chayanov(a), 1966, p. 12.
[21] Daniel Thorner "Chayanov's Concept of Peasant Economy" pp. xi-xxiii in Daniel Thorner, Basile Kerblay and R.E.F Smith, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, Homewood, Illinois 1966 p. xvii.

exploited work force, indicating that the first had the financial capacity to hire the latter, and employ them to gain profit. Accordingly a capitalist agricultural class, the self-perpetuating and exploitative "kulaks", dominated the agricultural economy of the Soviet Union and constituted a significant threat to the poor and middle peasants. In contrast to Chayanov, Kritsman identified capitalist farmers within the Russian peasantry, who exploited their neighbours economically.[22] The distinction he used in order to categorise the peasantry was the possession of cultivated land and numbers of horses. Kritsman defined five different social strata: 1) those without cultivated land and one horse; 2) two desiatines of land and two horses; 3) from two to four desiatines and three horses; 4) from four to ten desiatines and four horses; 5) with more than ten desiatines and more than five horses. He argued that the development from 1917 to 1920 was the following:

**Table 1**: Distribution of cultivated land and proportion of horses according to Kritsman

| l land | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | To 2 desiatines | From 2 to 4 desiatines | From 4 to 10 desiatines | More than 10 desiatines |
| | 30.4% | 30.1% | 25.2% | 3.7% |
| | 47.9% | 31.6% | 15.3% | 0.5% |
| Proportion of ho ses | | | | |
| | 2 horses | 3 horses | 4 horses | More than 5 horses |
| | 49.2% | 17.0% | 0.9% | 0.5% |
| | 33.6% | 7.9% | 0.2% | |

[illegible] *Расслоение в Советской деревне*, Moscow 1926, p. 17)

hese numbers indicate that if a capitalist class existed in Soviet agriculture, its proportion iminished from 1917 to 1920. Fewer peasants had more than four desiatines of farming land and ur horses, and less was without land and without horses. The proportion of those with up to two siatines of land and two horses increased significantly, indicating that a substantial number of asants became poorer in the years following the October Revolution. Kritsman accepted that viet agricultural was in severe economic crises in these years. However, he argued that the ploitative capitalist "kulak" had survived and still posed a threat to the peasantry. In fact,

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. Kritsman, *Классовое Расслоение в Советской деревне*, Moscow 1926, p. 3 ff.

Kritsman believed that the social class was self-perpetuating – that is the capitalist would always reproduce capitalist among themselves.[23] He asserted that in 1924 35.6% of all Soviet peasantry households were categorised as poor or landless, meaning they had no horses and held 9.6% of the total cultivated land. Those household with one horse comprised 35.1% and held 26% of the total proportion of land. 20% of the households had two horses and held 31.4% of the land. Only 5.8% of household held three horses, but, nevertheless, owned 16.5% of the cultivating land. That is, they held comparatively more land than those with less than three horses. The same pattern arguably continued, when the 2.1% of the total households held four horses and 9.8% of the total cultivated land. In comparison, Kritsman also stated that 1% of the households possessed five horses, and held 4.9% of the cultivated land. Finally he argued that 0.4% of the households had more then five horses and held 1.8% of the total cultivated land.[24]

**Table 2:** Social composition in the countryside by 1924 according to L. Kritsman

| % of households | Number of horses | Proportion of land in % |
|---|---|---|
| 35.6 | None | 9,6 |
| 35.1 | 1 | 26,0 |
| 20 | 2 | 31.4 |
| 5.8 | 3 | 16.5 |
| 2.1 | 4 | 9.8 |
| 1 | 5 | 4.9 |
| 0.4 | More than five | 1.8 |

(Source: Kritsman, 1926, p. 151)

This would mean that even if more peasants were getting poorer, the rich still dominated the agricultural development of the 1920s. Also, it suggests that there was a disproportion between the number of horses and the proportion of cultivated land: those with more horses tended to hold more of the cultivating land. Kritsman's solution to the problem was an agricultural revolution consisting of two phases: 1) a merciless class struggle against the capitalist peasantry, destroying their economic and social position; 2) an expropriation of the households of the capitalist peasantry, by creating a union of the proletariat and the poor peasants and landless.[25] The social class and socio-

[23] L. Kritsman, *Die Heroische Periode Der Grossen Russischen Revolution*, Berlin 1929, pp. 29-30.
[24] Kritsman, 1926, p. 151.
[25] Ibid, p. 15.

economic differentiation was therefore significant in Kritsman's theory – he believed that an inner-social conflict of the Soviet peasantry could be used in the promotion of Soviet policy in the countryside.

*2.1.3 The situation of Soviet agriculture*

Which of these two positions, Chayanov's or Kritsman's, was correct? Was the Russian peasantry constructed upon a non-wage family economy, or was it stratified according to social classes? The Stalinist regime clearly preferred Kritsman's definition of social classes, as it was closer to Lenin's view. This became apparent in 1929, when dekulakisation was launched. Chayanov was arrested and, along with other leading intellectuals of the People's Commissariat of agriculture of the RSFSR (NKZem RSFSR), sentenced in 1932 to five to eight years imprisonment in the concentration camps. Most of these intellectuals never left prison alive.[26]

Even if the Soviet leadership supported Kritsman something implies that the social structure of the peasantry was much more complex than the class distinction would lead to believe. There was naturally a growing tension among the peasantry by the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.[27] One important development was the seasonal return of *otkhodniki*, who by the turn of century had migrated from the villages into the cities in order to find work in the factories, mines and building sites. Their leaving would often be temporary, and when returning, which they did in large number from 1917-20, a conflict between them and the more prosperous peasants would appear. When the Bolsheviks organised the poor peasants in the *kombedy*, it was, among others, these returned *otkhodniki*, whose behaviour to a large extent caused dissatisfaction among the rest of the villagers. There are many reports of clashes between the more productive peasants and the otkhodniki during the Civil War of 1918-21, and it is plausible to assume that this conflict re-escalated at the end of the 1920s, when the Stalinist leadership launched its attack upon the kulaks.[28] The kombedy and its members were zealous activists and would use any opportunity to turn in those, who had crossed them as kulaks.[29] Such procedures imply a large degree of randomness in the identification of class enemies, rather than a well-organised attack on a specific stratum of exploiters.

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[26] Heinzen, 2004, p. 217.
[27] James Hughes, *Stalinism in a Russian Province. Collectivization and Dekulakization*, London 1996 p. 5.
[28] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization*, New York, 1994, pp. 32-33.
[29] Service 1995, p. 54.

The argument is not that socio-economic differences were unknown among the peasantry; on the contrary, conflicts became more and more frequent during the 1920s. It is, nonetheless, difficult to determine the reason for this. Most of the hired labourers in the Russian peasantry originated from the family. Eight out of ten heads of peasant households traditionally hired members of their family in order to cultivate their land, which supports the view that the different possibilities of the Russian peasantry was determined by demographic distinctions rather than class belonging.[30] The development of NEP benefited some more than others, but this did not necessarily depend on the class belonging of individual peasants.[31] The OGPU naturally considered it to be a problem, and in July 1924 its head Feliks Dzerzhinskii advocated the implementation of a three-step plan in order to minimise the socio-economic differences of the countryside: 1) To implement an enormous agricultural reform, which benefited the poor peasants and weakened the kulaks; 2) Most importantly, to give industrial support to the peasantry; 3) To support the development in the countryside by offering bank credit and providing technological assistance in order to improve the machinery and equipment that was at the disposal of the peasantry.[32] The growing tension within the peasantry during the 1920s may explain some of the social pressure behind dekulakisation: it is plausible that individual peasants, while given the political authorisation of the Soviet government to pillage the household of their more prosperous neighbours, would do so, in order to gain economic profits – and to weaken their neighbour.

*2.1.4 The problems of Soviet class structure*

Western scholars have traditionally accepted that such class structures existed in the Soviet Union. E.H. Carr is one of the most prominent, supporting this assessment in his work. He has recently been strongly criticised as being too much of a Kritsmanite, uncritically accepting the Stalinist argument about the nature of development in the 1920s.[33] However, Carr accepted that: "... the criteria of classification of the peasantry as *kulaks*, middle and poor peasants, were uncertain and fluctuating, and were partly dictated by the political requirement of the moment."[34] Sheila Fitzpatrick argues that the classes of Soviet society were invented in order to make the young Soviet

[30] Gatrell, 1986, p. 72.
[31] Carr, 1970, p. 112.
[32] A. Berelowitch and V. Danilov, *Советская Деревня глазами ВЧК – ОГПУ – НКВД. Том 2. 1923-1929*, Moscow 2000 pp. 223-226.
[33] Heinzen,2004, p. 262, n.59.
[34] E.H. Carr, *The Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin (1917-1929)*, London 1979, p. 22.

republic resemble the Marxist theory upon which the leadership based its ideology.[35] People were not born into a class, but ascribed to it by the regime. The class concept was a label of identification or a social construction.[36] The whole design of the Soviet peasantry, with the differentiation of batraki, bedniaki, seredniaki, zazhitochnyi and kulaki, could clearly be read as a political construction by Lenin and his followers. Rather than a social deterministic stratification, class was a concept akin to the "racial concept" of Nazi Germany: it was a matter of attributing one group positive characteristic, and ascribing them with legal rights, and denouncing another by excluding them as aliens, idlers, thieves or in short *enemies*.[37] The class concept is more flexible than the racial concept, which also implies that the attack on class enemies in the Soviet Union was much more arbitrary than the racial discrimination of Nazi Germany. To understand the difficulty of stratifying the Russian peasants into classes, we have to look further into the nature of the Soviet "kulak".

### *2.1.5 The flexible class structure of the Soviet countryside*

The First World War, the October Revolution, the Civil War and War Communism (1918-1921) changed the position of the kulaks. The Black Repartition of 1917, which the Bolsheviks eventually supported also led to the complete destruction of the landowners: the gentry grain estates that traditionally had supported the domestic and foreign market, were effectively dismantled during this peasant revolution. If the kulak had existed before, he was undermined radically alongside the landowners and landlords when Lenin and his followers gained power in 1917. This was, in part, due to the socio-economic instability, following the events mentioned above, and in part due to a restrictive elimination of social classes conducted by the Soviet regime.[38]

The Bolsheviks had immense difficulties defining the Soviet "kulak", and Lenin himself was never specific when it came to this matter. In 1926 the commissar of agriculture in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, A.P. Smirnov, argued that the exploiters of Soviet agriculture had disappeared because of the restrictive policy following the October Revolution. The academic Strumilin in 1929 pointed to the difficulty of distinguishing the kulak from the middle peasant and

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[35] Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 29 and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, New York 1999, pp. 11-13.
[36] "Social Identities" pp. 15-19 and Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class. The construction of social identity in Soviet Russia" pp. 20-46 in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism. New Direction. Rewriting Histories*, London 2000.
[37] Golfo Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcast. Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926-1936*, Ithaca 2003, pp. 10-11.
[38] Werth, 1999, pp. 47-52.

the middle peasant from the poor peasant.[39] While a pre-revolutionary "kulak" was a moneylender and a trader, the Soviet "kulak" was in March 1929 defined as a person who:

> 1) hired permanent workers for agricultural work or artisan industry;
> 2) owned an "industrial enterprise" such as a flour mill, dairy establishment or equipment for husking, for wool carding or combing, for making starch or potato flour, for drying fruit or vegetables, and so fourth – but only if provided with an engine or a windmill or watermill;
> 3) hired out, permanently or seasonally, complex agricultural machines driven by an engine;
> 4) hired out, permanently or seasonally, equipped premises for dwelling on business purposes;
> 5) was related to people engaged in commerce or usury or who had other sources of income not derived from labour.
>
> (Source: Moshe Lewin, "Who was the Soviet Kulak?" pp. 121-141 in Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System*, London 1985, p. 127)

This was a flexible and arbitrary definition, especially as the hiring of manpower was often a matter of employing members of the family.[40] In addition a peasant, stigmatised as a "kulak", could be degraded to middle or poor peasant by dividing his property among his family. This was officially termed "self-dekulakisation", or, a voluntary subdivision of properties amongst family members, which often appeared during the 1920s.[41] The arbitrary treatment of the peasantry became even more apparent when poor peasants, termed as "kulak henchmen" or *podkulachniki*, were placed alongside the kulaks.[42] Moshe Lewin argues that the Soviet "kulak" to a large extent was akin to the Russian *muzhik* – referring to the traditional Russian peasant. The muzhik would often resist the transformation of Soviet society, as the aims of the agricultural policy of the regime were against

[39] Moshe Lewin, "Who was the Soviet Kulak?" pp. 121-141 in Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System*, London 1985, pp. 123-24 and E.A. Rees, *State Control in Soviet Russia*, London 1987, pp. 123-127 – notice table 4.10 at page 125.
[40] Lewin, 1985, p. 125.
[41] V.P. Danilov, *Советская Доколхозная Деревня: Население, Землепользование, Хозяйство*, Moskva 1977, pp. 262-63.
[42] Mace, 1983 p. 283 and Conquest, 1986 p. 75.

their interest. Therefore they would and could withdraw from the market, and hide grain away from the requisition squads.[43]

James Hughes raises a counterargument to this position, asserting that the development of the 1920s had caused a social imbalance in the countryside, which created latent conditions for a social conflict within the peasantry.[44] Whilst conceding that it was immensely difficult to distinguish kulaks from well-off middle peasants, Hughes argues that the development of the 1920s had caused a significant inequality within the peasantry. His case study on Siberia shows that socio-economic differentiations existed in part caused by the procedure of lending mowing machinery, threshers, and draft animals between neighbours. Such services were often paid for by non-monetary resources such as helping the lender when his land had to be cultivated, assisting him with the harvest, or simply though the payment in kind (grain). Peasants who possessed this machinery could lend their machinery out in exchange for valuable working hours or other similar resources. The result of this was that those who borrowed equipment would be dependent on their more prosperous neighbours. Those with lesser resources (fewer horses, a smaller quantity of cultivated land and a smaller family) were socially and financially weaker than the more well-off peasants.[45] A market-oriented agriculture gained ground in various regions of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, which placed some peasants in more favourable positions than others. It is not, however, very clear, as to social tension of the Soviet countryside can alone be attributed to class differentiation within the peasantry.

The socio-economic differences Hughes refers to could, perhaps have been caused by demographic differentiation within the peasantry – some families were larger than others, and had more possibilities in terms of cultivating their land. The social differences can therefore also be explained through the theories of Chayanov. For one thing, it is difficult to define objectively classes in the Soviet peasantry. This became clear during the grain collection campaign of 1928, when the OGPU realised that the designated "kulaks" were not alone in resisting the centralised requisition.[46] Several reports indicated that poor and middle peasants also concealed grain from the requisition squads. The OGPU described the concealment of grain as a counter-revolutionary act committed by the

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[43] Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, London 1968 p. 252.
[44] Hughes, 1996, pp. 5-8.
[45] James Hughes, *Stalin, Siberia and the crisis of the New Economic Policy*, London 1991 p. 69, pp. 73-78 and p. 96.
[46] The Soviet regime had already by 1917-18 introduced centralised requisition campaigns, where the regime often violently confiscated the grain of the peasantry. The peasantry naturally reacted to this, often by hiding their grain. The Soviet regime had not been able to meet its quotas in 1927, 1928 and 1929, and ascribed it to kulak sabotage (or hiding of grain). For more on this "grain crises" see: E.H. Carr and R.W. Davies, *Foundation of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, volume 1, London 1969, pp. 42 and 44-45.

kulaks, who had forced the poor and middle peasants to carry out this criminal act.[47] The OGPU, however, also realised during this grain collection campaign that the poor and middle peasants depended on the supplies of the "kulaks". This was depicted as a negative correlation, but there are indications that if the "kulaks" were removed and their grain confiscated, the poor and middle peasants would not know how to purchase food for themselves and their family. The productive peasants had enough supplies to ensure the existence of the local community, and thus the removal of the "kulaks" had wider consequences for the rural society.[48]

The peasant resistance to the forced collectivisation also indicates that peasant discontent was directed towards the Soviet regime. When women violently objected to the state intrusion of the countryside they did so not as poor peasants, middle peasants or kulaks, but as women. This resistance might have been caused by the fact that the Soviet regime was attacking their domain: the private sphere of the household. The women traditionally looked after the cows, and the collectivisation would be an attack on their domain, as the Soviet project implied an attempt to absolve the right to possess private livestock. The *'babi bunty'* (Women's riot) was a response to the start of Communist activity in the countryside. Women led the peasant resistance, perhaps because the peasantry was convinced that the regime would not hurt them, and did the "talking" – that is they rebelled against the collectivisation of agriculture and attacked the representatives of the Soviet state in the countryside.[49]

The destruction of livestock, machinery and cultivated land during the campaign was done as a collective action by the peasantry. One of the many demands of the rebellious peasants was also that the dekulakised families should be allowed to return to the villages – this means that what the Soviet regime conceived as an exploitative element was considered as being a natural element of the village by the peasantry.[50] Those peasants who supposedly were to benefit from collectivisation, the poor and batraki, were moreover sceptical towards entering the newly established collective farms. Some joined them, but if we examine the official statistics of the Soviet government a very interesting paradox emerges. By 1 October 1929 30.5% of the Soviet peasantry belonged to the categories of either poor peasants or batraki. However, only 7.6% of the overall peasantry had entered the collective farms voluntarily, which suggests that the regime had not managed to capture

[47] Berelowitch and Danilov, 2000, pp. 664-679.
[48] Ibid., 667.
[49] Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin. Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance*, New York 1996, chapter 6.
[50] Andrea Graziosi, *The Great Peasant War. Bolsheviks and Peasants, 1917-1933*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996, p. 54.

a large majority of their expected allies.[51] It is plausible that the peasant resistance against the Stalinist project in the countryside was comprehensive, and not only comprised a certain category of "kulaks"; in 1929 over 1300 peasant revolts occurred against the regime, and the OGPU reported in 1930 another 402 incidents in January, 1048 in February and 6528 in March.[52] Molotov consequently talked about the united front of the countryside in 1929, suggesting that the state realised its ambition to mobilise the poor peasants and batraki had failed. James Hughes accepts this failure of capturing the peasantry in his conclusion, and also asserts that the peasant resistance became more organised in 1930 compared to 1929.[53]

Mark B. Tauger has questioned the extent of peasant resistances, arguing that the response of the peasantry was more ambiguous than the "resistance interpretation" would lead one to believe. Firstly, he argues that fewer peasants than is traditionally believed responded by violent resistance. Secondly, he states that the attitude within the peasantry towards the state policy varied significantly. And thirdly, Tauger asserts that far more peasants adapted to the collectivisation process and participated in the creation of a new collective sector of Soviet agriculture.[54] Such an assessment suggests that many peasants supported collectivisation and voluntarily joined the kolkhozy and sovkhozy. Tauger, however, agrees that many peasants resisted collectivisation.[55] The resistances, like the political terror of the Soviet state, varied from time to time – while it in some periods was radical and violent it would in others be more relaxed. Whereas March 1930 was particularly violent, with 6528 cases of social disorder, April 1930 was less so with 1992 cases. Although almost 2000 cases of disorder in April must be considered significant, the state only suppressed 56 of these incidents (2.8%) by force. In March the state had used force on 807 occasions (12.4%).[56]

It is worth noting that the peasantry had been disarmed by the Soviet regime in 1921, as a result of its defeat during the peasant rebellions,[57] yet they were still able to raise a violent resistance against the regime by 1929-30. Their only weapons were pitchforks, axes and other working tools.[58] Also,

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[51] Ivnitskii, 1996, p. 20.
[52] V.P. Danilov and N.A. Ivnitskii (ed.), *Документы свидетелствуют: Из истории деревни накануне и в ходе коллективизации, 1927-1932 гг.*, Moscow 1989, p. 23 and Viola 1996, pp. 138-39.
[53] Hughes, 1996, p. 212.
[54] Mark B. Tauger, "Soviet Peasants and Collectivization, 1930-39: Resistance and Adaptation" pp.427-456 in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3&4, April/July 2004, pp. 449-451.
[55] Ibid., 428.
[56] Ibid., p. 435.
[57] The peasantry reacted to the Bolshevik regime by a comprehensive rebellion from 1918-21. For more on these peasant rebellions see: Graziosi, 1996 and Nicolas Werth, "A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and terror in the Soviet Union" in Stéphane Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, London 1999.
[58] Graziosi, 1996, p. 53.

Molotov's statement from 1929 implies that the strength of the resistance was terrifying for the Soviet state. This would suggest that the sympathy of the peasantry was directed inwardly, and not outwardly.

## 2.2 The anti-kulak campaigns

### *2.2.1 The liquidation of the kulak as a class, 1929-33*

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union set up a commission on 5 December 1929 chaired by Yakovlev, which was given two weeks to prepare a draft decree on the rate of collectivisation – it, in others words, became a product of the feverish haste generally characterising the political transformation of Soviet agriculture. Various subcommissions were established in order to discuss different aspects of the process. The subcommission on the kulaks is particularly interesting, as a disagreement between the members emerged. The head of the kulak subcommission, Bauman (secretary of the Moscow region and the former head of the Central Committee department on work in the countryside), had already in July and August 1929 implied that some kulaks, under certain conditions, could be admitted into the new collective farms. However, at least two other members of the subcommission, Ryskulov and Kaminskii advocated strong discrimination of the kulaks including expropriation of property and land, physical removal and exclusion from the kolkhozy.[59] The members of the commission reach no agreement, and the discussion continued. On 27 December 1929, when Stalin delivered his speech to the conference of Agrarian Marxist, he proclaimed:

> ...we have passed from the policy of limitation of the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks to the policy of the liquidation of the kulak as a class.
>
> (source: "К вопросам аграрной политики СССР" pp. 141-172 in J.V. Stalin, *Сочинения*, Том 12, апрель 1929 – июнь 1930, Moscow 1949 p. 169)[60]

This would suggest a severe worsening in the political and social position of "kulaks", yet the final decision was not taken until a meeting in a Politburo commission, chaired by Molotov, on 30 January 1930. Here the resolution "On the Measures for the Liquidation of Kulak Households in Districts of Comprehensive Collectivisation" was adopted. This document divided "kulaks" into

[59] Ivnitskii, 1996, p. 40 and R.W. Davies, *The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture 1929-1930*, London 1980, pp. 142 and 188-194.

[60] Translated in Lynne Viola, "The Role of the OGPU in Dekulakization: Mass Deportation and Special Resettlement in 1930". *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, number 1406 (2000). pp. 3-4.

three categories according to which, treatment was decided. The first category was termed as the most dangerous or "the counterrevolutionary kulak active" (in Russian: контрреволюционный кулацкий актив). They were to be arrested immediately, placed in concentration camps and subdued with the highest repressive measures [in Russian: вышей меры репрессии]. What the latter implied is unclear: had the authority stated that the first category of kulaks were to be subjected to the highest measure of punishment [in Russian: вышей меры наказание or ВМН] there could be no doubt, as this would have meant execution. The use of the word 'repression' gives a more ambiguous meaning – implying that death sentences were not automatically adopted. Vladimir Zemskov has established that special troikas, consisting of the local chairman of OGPU (PP OGPU), the chairman of the raikom or obkom of the Communist Party, and the local state prosecutor, tried and sentenced the "kulaks" of the first category.[61] In a secret report of April 1930 it was noted that 329 persons were shot in Tomsk during March and April that year sentenced in accordance with article 58.[62] Article 58 referred to political crime, including counter-revolutionary activity in the countryside, and it is probable that the majority of the executed in Tomsk must have belonged to the first category "kulaks".[63]

If the numbers of Tomsk for March and April 1930 was representative of all other provinces of the Soviet Union, it implies that we are dealing with a large number of executions during the first wave of dekulakisation.[64] Davies and Wheatcroft assert that 18,966 death sentences of first category "kulaks" were adopted in the period from January to October 1930. This suggests that at least 20,000 people, and possible even more, were executed in 1930 as first category "kulaks".[65] If we add the death sentences for counter-revolutionary activity in 1931 (which was during the second wave of dekulakisation) the total number of executed first category kulaks would rise. V.V. Luneev argues that 1481 individuals were sentenced to execution in 1931, while V.P. Popov raises this to 10,651.[66] It is difficult to explain the difference between these numbers (as both have 20,201 death sentences for 1930, 2728 for 1932 and 2154 for 1933), but Luneev implies that the statistics

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[61] Vladimir N. Zemskov, *Спецпоселенцы в СССР 1930-1960*, Moskva 2005, p. 16. He has developed this argument in previous publications like: V.N Zemskov, ""Кулаческой ссылка" в 30-е годы" in *Социологические исследование*, 1991 № 10, p. 3.

[62] V. I. Markov and B.P. Trenin, *Из истории земли Томской. 1930-1933. Народ и власть*, Tomsk 2001, pp. 298-303.

[63] Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice Under Stalin*, Cambridge 1996, p. 92.

[64] Dekulakisation comprised two waves: the first was from January-March 1930 and the second from July 1930 to 1932/33. On this see R.W. Davies, *The Socialist Offensive. The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930*, London 1980 p. 182ff and R.W. Davies/S.G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger. Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*, London 2004, p. 1ff.

[65] Davies/Wheatcroft, 2004, p. 22.

[66] Both Luneev and Popov use the term 'BMH' in their statistic, referring to 'the highest measure of punishment', which must refer to 'execution'.

provides two sets of figures for some of the years. Yet there is no precise explanation to the variation in either of the works. The problem is also that the data were collected in December 1953, which would raise uncertainty regarding its reliability. However, the numbers suggests that the total death sentences of 1930-31 varied from 21,682 to 30,851,[67] which implies that 'the highest repressive measures' often resulted in death sentences in these two years. The families of the first category were to be deported to a region far away from their home community. Any traces of this group, both of the kulak himself and his descendants, had to be removed from the villages where they came from.

The second category of "kulaks" was "the remaining elements of the kulak active, especially from the richest kulaks and semi-landowners" (in Russian: остальные элементы кулацкий актив, особенно из наиболее богатых кулаков и полупомещиков), who were likewise to be deported along with their families to a region far away from their home district. The third category of "kulaks" were considered the less harmful, and could remain within their own district, but were to be resettled on new land areas outside the boundaries of the collective farms (кулаки, которые подлежат расселению на новых отводимых им за пределами колхозных хозяйств участках). The "kulaks" of the second category and the families of first and second category were deported to the Northern part of Russia, the Ural, Western Siberia and Kazakhstan.[68] In the period from 1930 to 1932/33 more than 2 million people were deported from their local communities and placed in so-called special settlements or *spetspereselenie*. Another 2.5 million people were resettled outside the newly established collective farms as third category kulaks.[69]

### *2.2.2 Kulak children and dekulakisation*

The Politburo decree "On Measures for the Liquidation of Kulak Household in Districts of Comprehensive Collectivisation" of 30 January 1930 specifically declared that the whole household, including the children, were to be removed from the villages as part of the liquidation of the kulak as a class.[70] This suggests that the authorities did not differentiate between kulaks and their children in the initial phase of the dekulakisation.

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[67] V.V. Luneev, *Преступность XX века. Мировой криминолический анализ*, Moscow 1997, p. 180 (Table 1) and V.P. Popov, "Государственный террор в советской России 1923-1953 гг. (источники и их интерпретация)" pp. 20-31 *Отечественные архивы*, 1992, Volume 2, p. 28 (Table 3) and p. 29. note *.
[68] TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 3142, ll. 4-9.
[69] S.G. Wheatcroft and R.W. Davies, "Population" pp. 57-80 in R.W. Davies et. al. (eds.) *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945*, Cambridge, 1994 p. 68.
[70] TsDAGO f. 1, op. 20, delo 3142, ll. 4-9.

It is quite likely that kulak children were deported as a logical consequence of the repressive policy, simply because the household of their fathers was liquidated – emphasising the importance of the family in the traditional Russian peasantry. Kulak children, in other words, comprised a significant component of the traditional peasant household. Furthermore, it is apparent that the regime was either blind towards, or simply ignored children at the initial phase of dekulakisation. For example, when discussing the fate of kulaks their children are rarely mentioned – it was as if they did not exist in the mind of the Soviet authorities.[71] In the view of the officials the plan had first priority; confiscating kulak grain and of emptying the villages of these people considered to be class enemies. In his classic on the Smolensk region Merl Fainsod quoted a document from the grain collecting campaign of 1929 where an emissary from Moscow asserts: "When you are attacking there is no place for mercy; don't think of the kulaks' hungry children; in the class struggle philanthropy is evil".[72] The OGPU collected numerous responses to the dekulakisation in Ukraine from 29 January to 26 March 1930 discussing how those designated as "kulaks", the local communities and the authorities reacted to the ongoing campaigns. What is significant about these documents is that they contain none, or only very little information about kulak children.[73] While there exists a significant number of documents regarding the situation of kulak children in deportation,[74] there is very little information about how kulak children responded to the restrictive measures before the deportation. This is despite several reflections about how the kulaks (the fathers of the household) reacted.[75]

However, there were Soviet officials, who warned about the consequences of deporting kulak children alongside their parents. One informer from Arkhangelsk, for example, asserted as early as 1930: "[...] If we destroy the kulaks economically, then we destroy their children physically – it is barbarous [...]"[76] Such a statement would imply that not everybody decided to ignore the impact dekulakisation had on children – even when the situation was most intense.

It is apparent that the OGPU in February 1930 defended the deportations of the first and second category "kulaks" and their families. This would also imply that the OGPU was defending the measures taken against the children. For example, it was established that:

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[71] See TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 3142, l. 68.
[72] Merl Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*, Cambridge Mass. 1958, p 241.
[73] To support see: TsDAGO f. 1, op. 20 delo 3189.
[74] See: S.S. Vilenskii, A.I. Kokurin, G.V.Atmashkina, I.Iu. Novichenko (red.), *Дети ГУЛАГа 1918-1956*, Moskva 2002, pp. 86-90, pp. 106-110 and V.P. Danilov and Sergei Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири 1930 – весна 1931 г.*, Novosibirsk 1992 pp. 257-59.
[75] TsDAGO f. 1, op. 20, delo 3142 l. 68.
[76] Vilenskii et al., 2002, p. 78.

> The transferred are placed in heated box wagons with 40 people in every heated box wagon. Taking note that the number of adults in each heated box-wagon is established to 35, the given number of transportation of kulak families is not harsh [in Russian: "не является жесткой"]
>
> (Source: V.P. Danilov et.al, *Трагедия Советской Деревни, том 2*, Moscow 2000 p. 168)

However, the members of the Politburo, and the leaders of the OGPU, were probably aware that such transportations were extremely hard for children. They only had to remember their own past, where there were plenty of examples of how children suffered during these expulsions. Deportations of whole families – including children – were a well-known phenomenon in a Russian context even pre-dating the Soviet regime. Families were forcefully removed from their home regions as early as 1914, as part of a Tsarist ambition to strengthen their political control over certain geographic areas of the country.[77] The Soviet regime continued this practice and it had far reaching consequences for the deported children. The influx of them to the Soviet concentration camps in 1919 as a consequence of the violent campaign against peasant rebellions during the Civil War is one clear example.[78] Since a number of Soviet officials responsible for the dekulakisation, such as the head of the OGPU Genrikh Yagoda, were active in the early 1920s,[79] it was possible he in January and February 1930 knew that political repression of perceived enemies often led to neglect and maltreatment of the children. It has been argued that the Soviet officials were on a learning curve through out the 1920s, moderating their radical thoughts in relation to society and thus striving to abandon political terror.[80] If such an argument holds it would imply that people (such as Yagoda), at least were aware of the impact deportation would have upon kulak children. A radicalisation occurred in November 1929, indicating that if a learning curve existed, it was abandoned. It does not preclude the possibility that the Soviet authorities knew very well in February 1930 that the deportation of kulak children was anything but "not harsh". Still, they

[77] Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaing against Enemy Aliens During World War I*, Cambridge, Mass., 2003, p. 123 ff..
[78] Vilenskii et al, 2002, pp. 18-19.
[79] Nicolas Werth, "A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and terror in the Soviet Union" in Stéphane Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, London 1999, p.62.
[80] Douglas R. Weiner has established this in his discussion paper, "Rethinking the Primacy of Terror: The Learning Curve of Feliks Edmunivoch Dzerzhinskii" presented at the annual convention of AAASS held in Toronto 20-23 November 2003.

decided to continue and maintain the liquidation of the household, which also implies that the treatment of children could be accepted.

The OGPU agents and Communist activists thus acted ruthlessly in relation to the children, and to a certain point defended it as necessary. They did not consider their deeds as being wrong, but conceived it as part of protecting the transformation of society. If this implied exclusion of children, then it was a price that had to be paid.[81] This means that the deportation of kulak children was a logical consequence of political decision to liquidate the kulak labour unit, and some in the Soviet leadership even believed it was necessary to adapt a formal decision to exclude kulak children.[82] Several leading officials of the OGPU supported kulak children being treated in the same manner as their parents.[83] It would also suggest that some in the Soviet leadership believed it was necessary to strike the supposed "kulaks" at their very nerve – the non-wage family economy – in order to weaken them politically and socially. We shall return (in chapter 3) to the ambiguous process of defining kulak children through the 1930s.

## 2.3 The role of the enemy

The ideological construction of classes within the Soviet countryside and society as such was therefore largely based on a misinterpretation of the social structure in society – in which the "kulak" concept largely served the purpose of legitimising official policy. The role of the "kulak" as an enemy of the Soviet regime needs to be considered, in order to understand the function this served for the regime, in terms of its own ideology, and as a mechanism of controlling society. One explanation is that the Soviet government needed a scapegoat, in order to conceal its own insufficiency. Rather than describing the grain deficit in 1927/28 as a logical consequence of a failed price regulating policy, the regime spoke of "kulak" sabotage, grain speculation and exploitation of the peasantry. Therefore, the official position was that there was nothing wrong with the policy; it was an evil and vicious class of kulaks that was undermining the transformation from succeeding – and the only logical reaction to this was to liquidate them as a social class.

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[81] In Hannah Arendt's unravelling of the Adolf Eichmann case in Jerusalem, we are confronted with the dilemma of choices among lower level officials – those who conduct the orders issued by the central authorities. It is evident from Arednt's work that low-level officials did not necessarily consider their actions morally wrong. Though there are several differences between Nazi and Soviet officials, this notion of moral superiority seem to apply to the actions of low level Soviet officials during dekulakisation. For more on Eichmann see: Hannah Arendt, *A Report of the Banality of Evil. Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964, pp. 21-23.

[82] On the debate of this issue see: Larry Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse. Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, Indiana, Michigan 1991, pp. 111-113.

[83] Dorena Caroli, *L'enfance abandonée et délinquante dans la Russie soviétique (1917-1937)*, Paris 2004, pp. 140-156.

Something suggests that the Soviet kulaks served the same role of the scapegoat as the pre-revolutionary Russian Jews had done. This became particularly evident in 1932, when the story of the murder on Pavlik Morozov emerged in the Soviet press. Although the crime was never fully investigated or solved, the kulaks were accused of the brutal murder of this young boy and his brother. Not only were the perpetrators kulaks, as rumour had it, but they were also related to the boys and committed the crime as acts of revenge. Pavlik Morozov had reported his own father to the Soviet authority for speculating in grain, and his uncles and grandparents killed him in order to set an example. This was the vicious reprisal of the kulak.[84] Although the murder was not motivated by religion, like the infamous myth of the Blood Libel,[85] there were some resemblances in how child murder was used to exclude Jews from the Tsarist Russian society and kulaks from the Soviet Union. The last European Jew to defend himself against the Blood Libel was the Russian official Mendel Beilis, who was on trail from 1911-13. His case has often been compared to the notorious Dreyfus affair (1894) in France; however the Beilis affair is complex not the least because he was acquitted by the Tsarist court.[86] In both the Beilis case, as in the case of the murder on Pavlik Morozov, the perpetrators were depicted as inhuman monsters, who would stop at nothing, not even infanticide, in order to achieve their goal: that of subjecting the rest of society to their speculative enslavement. One might argue that the Blood Libel myth was based on groundless accusations and had a much more wide-ranging effect on the European Jewish communities, whereas the murder of Morozov was a fact and only limited to a specific group of people – his relatives. However, the "kulaks" as a group were accused in the latter case with the specific purpose of attributing to them barbaric characteristics and thus institutionalising paranoia in society: not even children were sacred so "...Onwards in a merciless battle against these kulaks! Death to them!"[87]

By January 1933, when the famine was at its peak, Stalin delivered a speech, which emphasis the importance of the kulak scapegoat. The dekulakisation campaign had officially ended by 1933 hence it was unnecessary for Stalin to use the "kulak" concept. Nonetheless, he explained the low grain yield of the previous year in the following way:

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[84] Catriona Kelly, *Pavlik Morozov. The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero*, London 2005.
[85] In ancient Europe Jews were accused of slaughtering young virgin children, whose blood they used to bake the religious Passover bread "Mazzot" For more on this see: Cecil Roth, D. Phil., F.R. Hist. S. (editor) *The Ritual Murder Libel and the Jew. The report by Cardinal Lorenze Ganganelli (Pope Clement XIV)* The Woburn Press, 1979, p. 22.
[86] More on this see Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank 1894-1915)*, Cambridge 1991.
[87] Vasilii Novokshonov, *В тридцаты – комендатурские.(очерки по истории тегульдетского район)*, с. Тегульдет 1993, pp. 4-5.

> ...the defects in our work in the countryside is the instability of a number of our comrades in the localities to reorganise the front of the struggle against the kulaks; their failure to understand that the face of the class enemy has changed of late, that the tactics of the class enemy in the countryside have changed, and that we must change our tactics accordingly if we are to achieve success.
>
> (Source: J.V. Stalin, "Work in the Countryside [January 1933]" in J.V. Stalin, *Works*, Volume 13, July 1930-January 1934, Moscow 1955, p. 234.)

Stalin asserted that the kulaks had entered the collective farms, even if the official policy had been to exclude them, and thereby subverted them from within. The kulak was everywhere, and the activists needed to be aware of the constant danger he represented – even if he supposedly had been liquidated as a class in the preceding years. Later in February 1933 Stalin went even further and stressed that any compromise with individual farming implied a revival of the kulak:

> The restoration of the kulaks is bound to lead to the creation of a kulak power and to the liquidation of the Soviet power – hence, it is bound to lead to the formation of a bourgeois government
>
> (Source: J.V. Stalin, "Speech at the first Congress of Shock Brigades [19 February 1933]" in Stalin, 1955, p. 248)

While it is true that the regime had fought the kulak for the preceding couple of years, these designated class enemies had survived the struggle, changed form and reorganised. The Soviet state believed that the spirit of the kulak class lingered, regardless of the official abandonment of the dekulakisation policy; any compromises would inevitably lead to its own collapse. The "kulak" concept therefore continued to serve a political purpose, both as a scapegoat for the failed policy leading to the devastating famine, and as a motivation factor for the Soviet activists working in the countryside to continue fighting the resisting peasants. It would, moreover, legitimise the repressive policy carried through in relation to the peasantry, despite the catastrophic impact this had on the situation in the countryside – it was probably not a coincidence that Stalin depicted certain elements of the peasantry as vicious at a time when famine was ravaging society. Stalin and the Soviet leadership needed staying power in order for transformation of Soviet society to succeed. The concept of an enemy was important in order to maintain vigilance among those Stalinist activists

who from November 1929 onwards had been sent into the countryside from the larger cities in order to secure collectivisation of agriculture.

In the field of genocide studies, Helen Fein argues that an exterminated scapegoat serves no end.[88] This is important, when deciding the role of the enemy; however, the theory of the need of a scapegoat has some relevance in the Soviet context. Instead of being a fixed category, like Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals in Nazi Germany, the kulak was a flexible and arbitrary concept "...dictated by the political requirement of the moment."[89] It would suggest that the enemy concept could never disappear from the Soviet rhetoric, implying that it had a fundamental function in controlling society. The question, at least from a Stalinist position, is whether the collectivisation campaign could have been carried through without the enemy – whether or not the regime understood the world order in a very specific way necessitating the enemy label.

The mobilising effect of the kulak concept became clear in 1937, with the Great Purges. In August 1937 Order No. 00447, or the "round-up of former kulaks and other criminals", intensified these campaigns significantly. The NKVD issued quotas for those to be executed and imprisoned. The campaign was in part an attack on the kulaks; however, it also had another clear function in the inwards organisation of the NKVD. In late February and early March 1937 the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party held a plenary session, where the head of the NKVD, N.I. Ezhov, denounced his predecessor, Genrikh Yagoda, who had been in charge of the dekulakisation process in 1930-33. Yagoda had, according to Ezhov's speech, failed to understand that even if the battle was won in 1933, and Soviet agriculture was collectivised, class war continued. The NKVD misunderstood this and failed to continue its attack on the "kulaks" – they could carry on their "quite sabotage", without any significant disturbances from the state. Therefore the Soviet regime of 1937 had to respond to this situation, and new methods had to be invented. Ezhov's speech clearly served as a justification of the preceding purge in the NKVD, which had already begun in late 1936.[90] We shall return to the significance of Order No. 00447, and its impact on kulak children in chapter 3.

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[88] Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide. National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust*, New York 1979, p. 7.
[89] Carr, 1979, p. 22.
[90] David Shearer, "Social Disorder, Mass Repression and the NKVD during the 1930s" pp. 85-117 in Barry McLoughlin and Kevin McDermott (eds.), *Stalin's Terror. High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, London 2003, p. 88.

*2.3.1 The ending of the debate*

That the "kulak" was a construction is not unique in a Soviet context, since the whole class-structure to a large extent was based on a simplistic design. Even the proletariat, supposedly the natural ally of the Soviet regime, was an ideological construction.[91] And violence was not something, which emerged during the dekulakisation campaign.[92] It could be argued that the newly established Soviet regime was confronted by enemy forces already from the outset – one could mention the Civil War, where Tsarist officers organised violent resistance against the Bolsheviks, or the massive peasant uprising in 1921. This could lead to the conclusion that Soviet violence was an unintended consequence of social conflicts within society. Political violence was not, however, a malfunction in the system, being caused by circumstances outside its control, but rather the logical outcome of the forceful transformation of Soviet society. In order to understand this, we need to explore further the nature of the Soviet revolution.

As with the Fascist takeover in Italy by 1922, the Nazis rise to power in Germany by 1933, and Franco's victory in Spain in 1936, the Bolshevik conquest of Imperial Russia in October 1917 marked the end of the Old World order. What these regimes all had in common was that they were non-democratic.[93] Another thing the Nazi and Bolshevik regimes had in common was that they were structured according to the values of the modern world – order, hygiene, efficiency, science, control and aesthetics. With it also came a classification or naming of the world order – standards for right and wrong behaviour were defined.[94] The world order was differentiated into binary opponents; healthy versus unhealthy; hygienic versus unhygienic; control versus chaos; Aryan versus Jew; or progressive versus backward. The problems of order would always be conceived as something jeopardising and undermining the values of order – the unhealthy influence from within had to be eliminated in order to create a healthy and pure society.[95] The exclusion of unwanted elements was carried through by administrative means. The deprivation and dehumanisation of the unhealthy "other" became possible due to the modern invention of state bureaucracy and social science. Society was organised according to certain political and social priorities. All these regimes devised efficient means, whereby the population could be categorised and differentiated.[96]

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[91] Jonathan Aves, *Workers Against Lenin: Labour Protest and The Bolshevik Dictatorship*, London 1996.
[92] Peter Holquist, "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism" pp. 131-156 in David L. Hoffmann (ed.) *Stalinism. The Essential Readings*, Oxford 2003, p. 138.
[93] Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, London 2000, pp. 53-55.
[94] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge 1991, pp 1-6.
[95] Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution. Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1987*, London 1996, pp. 702-703.
[96] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vierter Band. Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis sur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten*, 1914-1949, München 2003, pp. 898-899.

In the Soviet case, this led to a division of society into categories such as: the Socialist regime versus kulaks; the State versus its opponents; the patriotic versus the unpatriotic; modernity versus backwardness and moral versus amoral. The regimes represented the positive features of this classification, whereas the "other" or the "enemy" embodied its negative attributes – that is the "problems of order". Therefore, the Soviet regime used "violence as a bureaucratic technique" in order to separate unhealthy "elements" in its ambition to create a beautiful and pure society.[97] "Political violence" became a political practice in modernising a society otherwise considered immensely backward. The argument is not that every single act was determined by such classification, but rather that the discourses of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes were heavily affected by it. The understanding of the world was based on Manichean oppositions of right and wrong. The process was complex, but the situation was more and more intensified and the state became increasingly involved in exclusion of unwanted elements from society.[98]

The more radical the Soviet discourse became in 1928-29, the more important it was for even low level officials to demonstrate their obedience to the General Line of the Soviet Communist Party. Any alternatives to the course of the Politburo often implied a purge, which became apparent in 1928-29, when leading intellectuals like Smirnov, Chayanov and others were expelled from the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of RSFSR and eventually arrested and charged with anti-Soviet activities.[99] With this radicalisation the remaining Soviet officials knew too well that it was impossible to hold an alternative position to the policy of the Politburo. They also knew that it was impracticable to include kulaks in the kolkhozy, when the decision of expropriating their properties was approved by the Politburo in January 1930. The debate was being concluded by the regime at this point. The designated kulaks became an increasing problem of the Soviet order – those who rejected state control and subordination to the plan. One of the slogans of the forced collectivisation campaign after all was "those, who do not enter the kolkhoz, are enemies of the Soviet power", indicating that a large proportion of the Soviet peasantry, even poor peasants and batraki, was considered to be latent kulaks or *podkulachniki*.[100]

It was an escalation of repression, in which the development followed different steps before ending up with the expulsion of the kulaks and their families from society. There were different options open until the beginning of 1930, however, every time the regime made a choice they made

[97] Holquist, 2003, pp. 155-156.
[98] Hans Mommsen, "Die Realisierung des Utopischen: Die "Endlösung der Judenfrage" im Dritten Reich" in *Geschichte und Gesellshaft* 9/3 1983, p. 399 and p. 417.
[99] Heinzen, 2004, pp. 192-219.
[100] Ivnitskii, 1996, p. 20.

it increasingly impossible to retreat from this path.[101] One possibility was to persuade the kulaks to join the collective farms voluntarily; another was to re-educate them in order to turn them into enlightened Soviet citizens; thirdly there was the possibility to deport them; and finally there was elimination, which was used on a large scale in 1937. The question is how the Stalinists legitimised such choices, and consequently why the enemy became important in the ideological comprehension of this development.

Since the Bolsheviks argued that they had undertaken the first socialist revolution in 1917, they also had to construct a society, at least rhetorically, which developed according to the mechanisms of Marxism: that is the dialectic of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie. The kulak term made sense to the Russian populists and socialists, both before and after the October Revolution.[102] It is in this context secondary as to what extent the termed applied to reality of the Soviet countryside. The more intense the situation became during the first winter of 1929-30, the more frequent the ideological justifications of the actions of the Soviet officials. This continued throughout the 1930s.[103] When the Soviet regime recruited political activists in November 1929 known as the 25,000ners the main concern was whether or not these people could be trusted ideologically. Their agricultural skills were secondary, as they were sent as emissaries with the specific purpose of implementing Soviet policy in the countryside.[104] When these people arrived in the villages they saw "kulak sabotage" and grain speculation in the peasant resistance and reacted accordingly. This was intensified by the fact that these emissaries often were the immediate targets of the resistance. Since the Politburo had legitimised the deportations of first and second category kulaks and their families on 30 January 1930, the emissaries and other activists used this in what they conceived as a battle against the petty bourgeoisie of the Soviet countryside. Also, it serves to explain the nature of the round-up of former kulaks in 1937: the Soviet regime needed the enemy in order to mobilise and motivate its activists.

There was a self-confirming logic attached to this comprehension. Those peasants being excluded from the villages by the Soviet government as "kulaks", either in the years following the October Revolution or during the dekulakisation campaign, would find themselves alienated and even

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[101] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London 1966, p. 71.
[102] Kelly, 2005, p. 22.
[103] David L. Hoffman "Was There a "Great Retreat" from Soviet Socialism? Stalinist Culture Reconsidered" pp. 651-674 and David L. Hoffman "Ideological Ballast and New Direction in Soviet History" pp. 731-733 in *Kritika*, Volume 5, Number 4, Fall 2004.
[104] Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland. Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization*, New York 1987, chapter 2.

hostile towards the invading state. If these peasants were not hostile beforehand, they would become so when the regime and its emissaries attacked them as "enemies of the Soviet state". The Soviet treatment of the peasantry created enmity among those being separated from society as "unwanted". This exacerbated the development immensely, leading to a war-like situation. And thus, the violent peasant uprising, both in the early 1920s and during the collectivisation of agriculture, was a logical consequence of Soviet policy in the countryside.

The ideological aspect is only one possible explanation for the function of the enemy. Another would be that the term served as a mechanism of controlling society in general, and the peasantry in particular. By showing decisiveness towards certain groups of society, the regime made an effective example – no one desired to be the next to undergo dekulakisation. The random stigmatisation of peasants as "kulaks" must have made the villagers reluctant, when confronted with the choice of joining the peasant resistance or entering the newly established collective farms. The regime intensified a notion of paranoia in society, when constantly speaking about a "kulak" jeopardising socialist development. Bearing in mind that the only possible way for a vast majority of the Soviet public to achieve knowledge about the situation, would be through the official media, it is possible that they would be inclined to believe that society was confronted by a constant threat from internal enemies.[105] The Soviet government, and in particular the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the General Secretary, had a knowledge, which was deliberately suppressed. The best known example is the public denial of the famine of 1932-33.[106]

The "kulak" also had a significant function within in the Communist Party and the NKVD, in the ongoing political struggle between the different fractions. The party was permeated by a strong conflict in 1928-1930 between what was termed the left wing (Stalin and his henchmen) and the right wing (Bukharin, Tomsky, Rykov etc.).[107] The Stalin group won this struggle by 1927-28 and was about to consolidate its power when the grain crises erupted. The right was denounced for being pro-kulak and therefore in support of capitalist restoration. This made them weak in a tense

[105] Robert Thurston has developed the theory in relation to the Great Purges that the public really believed that it was necessary to eliminate a grave threat: see: Robert Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia 1934-1941*, New Haven 1996, p. 228.

[106] Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, *Knowledge and Power. The Role of Stalin's Secret Chancellery in the Soviet System of Government*, København 1978, p. 34.

[107] Nikolai Bukharin had in 1925 encouraged the "kulaks" to enrich themselves; for more on Bukharin's position see: V.P. Danilov "Крестьянской хозяйство и кооперация в концепции А.В. Чаянова" in V.P. Danilov (ed.), *Человек и земля*, Moskva 1987, V.P. Danilov, "20-е годы: нэп и борьба альтернатив" in V.P. Danilov (ed.) *Историки спорят*, 1988 and V.P. Danilov, "Бухаринская альтернатива" in V.P. Danilov (ed.) *Бухарин: человек, политик, ученый*, Moskva 1990.

situation, where any suspicions of kulak-sympathies implied purges.[108] Therefore, the enemy not only served a control mechanism of society but also of the Communist Party and NKVD – any protection of the kulaks in 1929 and 1937 would logically be denounced as right wing opportunism.

[108] R.W. Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia 1. The Socialist Offensive. The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture 1929-1930,* London 1980, p. 399.

# 3. Kulak and kulak children

The chairman of the All-Soviet Central Executive Committee (VTsIK), Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, received a number of letters in 1930 regarding the situation of repressed and deported children. One of these, written by a group of prisoners in Vologda, read: "The terrible condition of prison life, poor nourishment and other causes, which our children live under – all this scourge of innocent children, the humiliating death, may be the sin for us as a class. But children should not answer for their parents and die like a class; and thus we urge you, honourable Mikhail Ivanovich, to save our children, the future of the Soviet Union..."[1] There is no information about Kalinin's response, which would create uncertainty regarding the stand point of the Soviet authorities on the position of children. The present chapter will discuss the relationship between the Soviet regime and the kulak children during the 1930s. Part of the discussion is related to development of the official policy, and part of it addresses the reaction of the kulak children to their life situation.

## 3.1 The distinction of kulak children and kulaks

Kulak children belonged to a certain category of Soviet society, which we might term as enemy children.[2] Since the October Revolution enemy children had already posed a significant dilemma in the general Soviet attempt to define childhood, because they – as children, on the one hand – were important in the construction of the new society, while, on the other hand, they were heavily affected by the ongoing restrictive policy against their parents – naturally, children could not be unaffected by this. As early as July 1919 Kalinin received a letter from the children of arrested parents which read:

> 21/VII 1919...
> Moscow. Kremlin. To Chairman Kalinin,
> We ask you imploringly to send your and comrade Lenin's order [about] the liberation of our parents Kulibanov [to] Vitebsk. Unhappy children.
> (Source: S.S. Vilenskii, *Дети ГУЛАГа, 1918-1956*, Moscow 2002, p. 29)

[1] S.S. Vilenskii, A.I. Kokurin, G.V.Atmashkina, I.Iu. Novichenko (red.), *Дети ГУЛАГа 1918-1956*, Moskva 2002, p. 77.
[2] Ibid.

This was one of the many petitions Kalinin received throughout the 1920s and 1930s from children asking him to assist their parents, or, as shown above, from parents urging him to save their children.[3] The emotional aspect – as presented by the Kulibanov children – was one significant problem emerging as a consequence of the repression of their parents. Another problem was that children often were arrested alongside their parents, as was argued in the preceding chapter. From August 1918 onwards the Bolshevik regime used concentration camps as means of repression.[4] Three years later in 1921, during the massive peasant resistance in Tambov, the construction of more camps was discussed. During this process it was revealed that: "In the camps a large number of children arrive, down to the very youngest age, even babies"[5] Naturally, this raised a question regarding what to do with these children – one thing was evident that "Because of the large influx into the concentration field camps of minors, from babies upwards, and these camps were unfit for a longer-term keeping of children [...] it is necessary to acknowledge [...] means of improving the position of children".[6] The placement of children in these camps, in other words, caused a significant problem, increasing the level of hunger, disease and infant mortality. Consequently, something had to be done in order to relieve the situation and it raised a principal matter: how far could the regime go in its political repression? Were children also to be repressed or was their position different? This question was raised again when the dekulakisation campaign commenced.

### *3.1.1 Kulak children and special settlements*

In a document detailing the arrival of deported kulak families in Western Siberia, issued on 26 February 1930 by Bazovskii, the deputy chairman of the executive committee of Siberskii krai, and Zakovskii, the chairman of the local OGPU, the kulak households were discussed. Their focus would be on the collective body of the family rather than on individual needs. Rations for the deported would, for example, be examined with no discussion as to what amount was for children in relation to adults.[7] This suggests that kulaks and kulak families were defined as one group at this point – or there were at least only limited attempts to differentiate between generations. This, however, changed shortly afterwards due to problems associated with the newly established special settlements.

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[3] Ibid., p. 29, p. 30, p. 55, p. 60, p. 65, and pp. 77-83.
[4] Nicolas Werth, "A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and terror in the Soviet Union" in Stéphane Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, London 1999, p. 80.
[5] Vilenskii, 2002, p. 18.
[6] Ibid., pp. 18-19.
[7] V.P. Danilov and Sergei Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири 1930 – весна 1931 г.*, Novosibirsk 1992, pp. 44-45.

Lynne Viola has argued that the deportation of kulaks and their families was, to a large extent, carried through *na khody* or in an ad hoc manner. There were few attempts to prevent any negative side-effects of the development beforehand, since in reality very little was planned in advance. The ambition in January 1930 was to liquidate the kulak households, but there was no discussion as to how this could in practice be carried out – aside from the fact that people had to be moved from their places of origin. Therefore, the deported kulak families arrived at empty construction sites, where they were expected to build their future settlements from scratch.[8] The deportees were then divided into two groups: the able-bodied and the non-able bodied. The latter would generally be breastfeeding mothers, children younger than 15 years, and the elderly. These would be placed in temporary settlements, often confiscated church properties, former jails or stables. Meanwhile, the deportees capable of working were removed to the sites of the future settlements, where they were expected to build roads, houses, sewers, hospitals, schools and post offices.[9] Since children comprised 40% of the newly arrived deportees, the authorities were forced to react to the problems emerging as a consequence of this situation: infant mortality rose dramatically, the disease frequency among kulak children grew significantly and food supply to the settlements dropped catastrophically. When it came to the question of food supply in the temporary and permanent settlements Soviet officials refused to take any responsibility immediately.[10] However, the authorities, or at least the OGPU, reacted to the situation as early as February 1930 – indicating that the situation was already from the start acute. On 10 April 1930 the Council of People's Commissariat of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (SNK RSFSR) issued an order "On the Measures for the regulations of Temporary and Permanent Settlements of Kulak Families", which stated the following concerning the kulak children:

> [The SNK RSFSR] suggests the *kraivyi* [regional] (*oblastnyi* [provincial]) executive committees of Ural, Siberia, the Far East and the Northern krai to immediately adapt measures for organising medical attendance points for the permanent settlement of kulak households, and also to the attendance of children (the re-education work within the schools).

[8] Lynne Viola "The Other Archipelago: Kulak Deportation to the North in 1930" pp. 730-755 in *Slavic Review* 60/4, (2001) pp. 732-734.
[9] Michael Kaznelson "Den lykkelige barndom. En analyse af kulak børnenes skæbne i årene 1929-33" pp.120-138 in *Den Jyske Historiker* nr. 101, July 2003, pp. 129-30.
[10] Viola, "Tear the evil..." 2000, p. 46.

Examining the increase of the disease frequency among children, to suggest the named executive committees to adapt the necessary measures at the temporary settlements and transportation to establish more normal circumstances for children [...]

(Source: V.P. Danilov and Sergei Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири 1930 – весна 1931 г.*, Novosibirsk 1992 p. 29)

The focus was, in other words, aimed at the symptom (the increased disease frequency) rather than the cause (the deportation of kulaks and their families). This became increasingly evident when the matter of "wrongly deported" was discussed by the SNK RSFSR on 10 April 1930. Children younger than 15 years fell into this category, and although not every child was returned, almost 35,000 were sent back from Northern Russia to their relatives by December 1930.[11] The limit was shortly afterwards lowered to the age of 10 years, which suggests that it was a controversial issue. The lowering of the age limit indicates that a debate regarding the placement of children was going on within the Soviet authorities. The procedure also reveals that the dominating notion among officials was that the plan of transforming Soviet society always had first priority: the emotional relationship of parents and children was unimportant. It was most important that the problem was out of sight, (the suffering children were returned to their relatives), so the regime could continue to repress the parents and the remaining children and those older than 15 years (later revised to older than 10 years). It is also important to note that by "wrongly deported" the SNK RSFSR was not only referring to children, but also to third category kulaks, who had been deported.[12] It is, nonetheless, clear that the authorities had to react to the situation, which also suggests that children first became noticeable when they constituted a serious problem. This underlines the nature of the *na khody* philosophy: a failure to foresee and anticipate problems.

It is evident that by spring and summer 1930 the authorities to a larger extent agreed that children differed from their parents – creating a distinction between the generations of the liquidated households. We can find such a notion in one particular case; the living conditions of the special settlements were terrible during the winter of 1930, with a significant number of deportees escaping from the settlements. The West Siberian OGPU reacted in a letter from 11 May 1930 "On the fight against arbitrary return of kulaks from the regions of settlements". The escapes, which often were caused by the desperate conditions in which the deported people lived, were made a criminal offence. However, in relation to the children, a very interesting point was made. As the OGPU

[11] V.P. Danilov et al, *Трагедия Советской Деревни, том 2*, Moskva 2000 p. 785.
[12] Danilov and Krasilnikov, 1992, p. 29.

emphasised that children could not be held responsible for the criminal action of their parents, they could not be blamed for the escape of their parents, even if they went with them. It was only natural, even from the point of view of the OGPU, that children followed their parents.[13] The terrible living conditions of the special settlements were one reason for this shift in the official approach to the children.

Another was that the authorities thought it possible to use the remaining children for a very specific purpose. In a secret report of a special commission of the SNK SSSR issued on 11 April 1930, the budget for controlling the special settlements was discussed in paragraph *7v*[14]:

> In the planning of the financial sources for the maintenance of the administration of kulak settlers at the end of the current budget year for every 500 families there may be one commandant and one leading *militsioner*, though not costing more than 800 thousand roubles
>
> (Source: Danilov and Krasilnikov, 1992, p. 32)

Complete control could not be maintained under these circumstances, and even if the leading *militsioner* was assisted by 1 police officer for every 50 families[15] it was still impossible to prevent the deported kulaks from also living an autonomous and independent daily life in the settlements. This was against the intention of dekulakising these peasants, and therefore the regime was concerned with this. The Bolsheviks had always had the ambition to recruit children, as they were conceived as "the potentiality" of the future, contrary to "the backwardness" of the older and more stubborn generations who apparently prevented modernisation from succeeding. The Soviet authorities began to show a growing interest in deported children during the spring of 1930. These would be – if the authorities could reach them – a cheap and efficient way to control their kulak parents in the special settlements. An objection to this idea may be that this hardly corresponds to the aforementioned fact that children were returned from deportation during the spring and summer of 1930. We should remember that the age limit was lowered to ten years old during 1930, implying that children from this age up to 15 years old remained in the settlements. There were children left in the settlements, despite attempts to relieve the catastrophic living conditions by returning some of them from the settlements as wrongly deported.

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[13] Sergei Krasilnikov, *Серп и молох. Крестьянская ссылка в западной Сибири в 1930-е годы*, Moscow 2003, p. 153.
[14] This would be *7c* in Latin, since the first three letters of the Cyrill alphabet are *a b v*.
[15] Viola, 2001, p. 738.

On 9 May 1930 the leaders of the OGPU in the Urals discussed the result of the preceding dekulakisation. The number of deported kulak families, numbers of individuals, distributions within the special settlements of the region, problems emerging among the settlers, and the relation to the local non-deported population were discussed. In the section of "The operation, intelligence and information service" (in Russian: "Оперативно-агентурное и информационное обслуживание"), we find a very interesting information. This discussed the situation within the information department of the OGPU (INFO), the counterrevolutionary department of the OGPU (KRO) and the secret department of the OGPU (SO). The recruitment of informers, working for the INFO, was established in paragraph 3:

> Mark out a framework of information enrolment in the size of no less than two informants for every 50 families. Out of this 50% of the network should be found among the young
> (Source: Danilov, et.al., 2000, pp. 449).

It is clear at this stage that the kulak young who were older than 15 years were considered important in maintaining control within the special settlements.[16] Whether this also implied that such recruitment applied to the treatment of children younger than 15 years is another matter. The myth of Pavlik Morozov, which was not launched until 1934 (but outlines events that took place in 1932) would suggest that at some stage it became an ambition to mobilise children younger than 15 years against their parents (Morozov was 13 years). It was presented as heroism to report upon any unusual activities of the parents, which in this particular case involved the hiding of grain and money from the Soviet authorities.[17] The myth of Morozov was based on a commonly-used Soviet method, being rooted in this early attempt of the OGPU to control deported kulaks: that is to mobilise children against their parents.

At this point the Soviet regime distinguished between adults and children living in deportation. Several minutes from meetings held in various special commissions of the Politburo, imply that this notion became dominant from late 1930 until 1931/32. One such commission meeting was held on 15 May 1931, headed by A.A. Andreev and attended by the head of the OGPU, Yagoda and the head of the GULAG Matvei Berman. This discussion was on the situation of deported kulaks,

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[16] V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири. Весна 1931 – начало 1933 г.*, Novosibirsk 1993, p. 9.
[17] Catriona Kelly, *Comerade Pavlik. The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero*, London 2005, p. xxiii.

however, it is evident from the minutes that a distinction between the generations of deportees was drawn – while the kulaks were enemies, and considered "backward", the children and young could be included into Soviet society under certain conditions.[18] We shall return to the significance of this meeting in a later chapter, and it is sufficient to establish that a shift in relation to kulak children must have happened. Another meeting in the Andreev Commission from 7 August 1931 likewise suggests that the Soviet regime was about to redefine its policy towards kulak children and young. The Commission discussed the situation among special settlements, and proposed that: "...it is to be deemed possible to restore rights to young who have reached the age of 18 prior to expiration of the five-year period in those cases in which these young people have shown themselves in a positive light."[19]

We can detect a counter-position to Andreev in a letter written by Stalin to Kaganovich on 31 August. The General Secretary responded to a correspondence of 26 August, and among other things commented upon the proposal from 7 August by the Andreev Commission. He stated: "8. There is no need for any law by TsIK [the Central Executive Committee of Soviets] on restoring the rights of certain former kulaks ahead of schedule. I just knew that the jackasses among the petty bourgeoisie and the philistines would definitely want to crawl into this mouse hold. Please put off this issue until the fall".[20] This harder line towards kulak children can also be seen in a document of July 1932, when the able bodied special settlers were categorised by the GULAG administration – a document signed by Berman. It was established here that the category of "able bodied" included children as young as 12 years old.[21] This would at least imply a worsening, of their status by legalising their employment in local industries. This work was extremely physically demanding and increased the death rate among the special settlers. This suggests that if a distinction between kulaks and their children existed within this system by 1931-32 it was not very clear as to where the line was to be drawn between adults and children. Therefore someone, in this particular case the GULAG administration (and most notably Berman), must have been against a rapprochement to kulak children, while others (like Andreev) supported it. Something implies that the softer line was adopted by the Soviet regime, which becomes particularly evident in a resolution issued by the presidium of the Central Executive Committee in the Soviet Union (VTsIK) leaded by Kalinin on

[18] G.M. Adibekov, "Спецпереселенцы – жертвы «сплошной коллективизации». Из документов «особой папки» Политбюро ЦК ВКП(б)" in *Исторический архив*, Volume 2, number 4, 1994, p. 158.
[19] Ibid., p. 169 (clause 31) – translated in R.W. Davies, Oleg Khlevnyuk, and E.A. Rees (ed.), *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence 1931-36*, New Haven 2003, p. 70 (clause 6).
[20] Davies, Kaganovich, and Rees, 2003, p. 69.
[21] Ibid., p. 91.

17 March 1933. This document granted kulak children living in the special settlements the voting rights for local Soviet elections, provided they had acted expediently.[22] It is not clear whether Stalin changed his mind from the aforementioned statement from August 1931 to the adoption of the resolution in March 1933. Yet the different signals suggest that a debate regarding the policy towards kulak children was unsolved by 1932-33. Kalinin's resolution followed a very dramatic period in Soviet history, which may explain the shift towards a softer line in March 1933.

### *3.1.2 Kulak children and the famine of 1932/33*

The Soviet countryside underwent a catastrophic turn during 1932 and 1933 when devastating famine affected large areas of the country.[23] A letter written by a schoolboy to the local village Soviet in Kalinov raion in Vinnitsa oblast in Ukraine in the spring of 1933 depicts the catastrophe:

> Kuzma Petrovich [...] A week ago my father died from the famine. My mother lies sick on the stove and is completely swollen [...] Besides me there are three children. They are swollen as well. Please help us with what you may. Today we do not have anything to eat not even a beet. Save the children. We entered the kolkhoz. And I along with mother are working to provide bread for the children [...]
>
> (Source: Nikolai Ivnitskii, *Репрессивная политика советской власти в деревне (1928-1933 г.)*, Moscow 2000, p. 295 [my translation and underline MK.])

The family, including the boy writing this letter, would shortly die from hunger. There are several traveller and eyewitness accounts from those years that give a picture of the devastating situation. People collapsed in the streets dying from hunger, children were left on their own unattended, since their parents could not take care of them, and there were even cases of cannibalism.[24] In work done on Italian reports on the situation in Kharkov, Andrea Graziosi concludes that the famine resembled a war situation. Despite the chaos and massive starvation, the Soviet regime continued to confiscate grain until at least the end of 1932 – that is while the situation was most acute.[25]

In contrast to the Soviet famine of 1921-22, the Stalinist government never officially recognised the ongoing starvation of 1932-33. This denial can be detected among even the highest ranking

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[22] V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири. 1933-1938*, Novosibirsk 1994, p. 14.
[23] Mark B. Tauger, "The 1932 Harvest and the Famine of 1933" pp. 70-89 in *Slavic Review* 50/1, (Spring) 1991 pp. 88-89.
[24] See, for example: Edwin E. Dwinger, *Og Gud Tier...? Beretninger og opraab*, København 1937, pp. 84-95 and p.103.
[25] Andrea Graziosi, *Guerra e rivoluzione in Europa, 1905-1956*, Bologna 2001, pp. 74-75.

people within the regime. Stalin, for example, instructed the Politburo on 18 June 1932 to: "fulfil the plan...at any cost".[26] Another instruction from Stalin to his right hand Lazar Kaganovich on 25 July 1932 asserted: "...the harvest prospects will become clear (they have already become clear!), that they are undoubtedly good for the USSR as a whole"[27] This was at a time when starvation was becoming evident. Nikolai Ivnitskii argues that the Politburo was probably well-aware of the consequences of its policy in the countryside, and as Vyacheslav Molotov asserted in the autumn of 1932: "We are confronting a real ghostly famine and this is in the richest grain areas...[we] will [however] not stop the fulfilment of the claimed plan for the grain requisition".[28] This would not only suggest a knowledge but also intensification of the tragic development.

The denials continued and the Soviet media never reported the famine, and in addition, aid from abroad was rejected – unlike the policy adopted during the famine of 1921-22.[29] During the famine of 1932/33 starvation was blamed not on a failed policy, but rather on kulak sabotage.[30] Whenever these accusations were mentioned, the Soviet regime often spoke about the designated kulak, even if the term was not used explicitly. In this context the distinction of kulaks and their children becomes interesting. In diary entries from January 1933 Kaganovich discussed this by stating:

> On a number of occasions it has been noticed that children are swollen from hunger, where they obviously are extremely underfed and they begin to search and find 75-100 *pud* grain [...] When asked, the head of the family keeps silent, or says "We should not get used to it"
>
> (Reproduced in V.P. Danilov et.al. *Трагедия Советской Деревни, том 3*, Moscow 2001, p. 639)

Kaganovich, in other words, believed that the peasants were in possession of grain even when the famine tormented society. The "kulaks" were not ready to share it with anybody, not even their own children, and hence their exploitative nature was exposed. The quantity of grain mentioned in Kaganovich's dairy entry justifies that he spoke of "kulaks" and that the swollen and hungry children were kulak children. Kulak children were used as an example to illustrate how cynical their kulak parents could be. The children were used to demonise "kulaks" even more than they had

[26] Davies, Khlevniuk and Rees, 2003, p. 139.
[27] Ibid., p. 167.
[28] Nikolai Ivnitskii, *Репрессивная Политика Советской Власти в Деревне*, Moskva 2000, p. 296 [my translation]
[29] Dana G. Dalrymple, "The Soviet Famine of 1932-34" pp. 250-284 in Soviet Studies, Vol. 15, No. 3, January 1964, pp. 267-68.
[30] Andrea Graziosi, *The Great Soviet Peasant War. Bolsheviks and Peasants, 1917-1933*, Harvard University 1996, pp. 59-70.

already been in the previous period – "kulaks" loved nobody but themselves, not even their own children. This diary entry was written at the same time as the Soviet press launched the Morozov myth, where a similar denouncing of grain speculators (that is "kulaks") was launched. One of the first elements of the case was infanticide – the relatives of Pavlik Morozov murdered him and his brother as revenge for having denounced their father.[31] The nature of the crime committed by the "kulak" relatives of these boys was related to the fact that children by definition were "innocent". Who could kill an innocent child, but really evil people? The role of the child as a victim has one important significance: it underlined the inhumanity of the excluded "other". Children, and most notably kulak children, were used to depict, dehumanise and exclude their parents in the public discourse. This was by no means a coincidence: famine raged the country, and the authorities were looking for scapegoats in order to mobilise its activists. Consequently, they attacked the "kulak" by ascribing them vicious motives such as hiding grain even from their own children.

*3.1.3 The prelude to the First Stakhanovite conference*

While the discussion of a distinction between kulaks and kulak children appears to have been affected by conflicts in 1932/33, the regime came to a sort of agreement by April 1934. Again the voting rights of kulak children were under discussion. In a secret report from 13 April 1934 Berman issued the following order:

*Explanation to the GULag OGPU on the question on re-establishing the voting rights for children of special settlers (spetspereselentsy)*

Top Secret

...

1. Re-establishing the voting rights for children of *spetspereselentsy* for the executive committees of the Raion in areas where the special settlements [*spetsposelki*] are located is necessary to conduct after having developed a broad enlightening work, using this restitution to heighten the youths work outcome in production, to carry through the sowing and to improve cultural work.
2. The restitution primarily concerns model workers (in Russian: *udarnik*) and social volunteers (In Russian: *obshchestvennik*).

[31] Kelly, 2005.

3. The restitution of the voting rights of children does not affect their parents' rights
4. Inform about the number of re-established at the GULag OGPU and at the same time note the number of not-included in the settlements after the restitution.

Head of the Chief Administration of the Camps of the OGPU [GULag OGPU]

M. Berman

(Source: V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири. 1933-1938*, Novosibirsk 1994, pp. 55-56)

There are several interesting features in this document: notably the clear distinction between adults and children. Whereas Berman in 1932 appeared as the hardliner, lowering the age of able bodied in the special settlements to 12 years, he in 1934 followed Andreev's and Kalinin's more moderate line in relation to this particular category of children. Furthermore it is important that not every child had their civil rights re-established – it was only those who participated in the transformation of Soviet society and did so voluntarily (that is *udarniki* and *obshchestvenniki*). It is not revealed what this implied in reality, but, as we shall discuss in a later chapter, it involved a possibility of discriminating against certain children. In addition, it is important to mention that voting rights were limited to the areas of the settlements, raising uncertainty as to whether these children would hold this right in the event that they moved to another region. This again would raise uncertainty as to what extent children were meant to leave the regions of the settlements.

On 27 May 1934 the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) adapted a resolution for the restitution of civil rights for "the most distinguished special settlers, particularly the youth". In January 1935 Berman elaborated on the problem of the outflow of former settlers, having their rights re-established. First of all he suggested to Yagoda that "1. To forbid a mass restitution of civil rights for special settlers" This repeated the aforementioned idea that these rights were not meant for everybody. Importantly it was insisted "4. To prevent special settlers whose civil rights have been restored from returning to their home regions [...]"[32] The argument was based on the assumption that a departure of special settlers meant a decline in the workforce of the area of special settlements. Also, it was crucially important for the Soviet state to prevent "kulaks" and their families to return to the villages of origin. Yagoda responded to this by asserting that it was urgently important to emphasise that the restitution of civil rights "...does not give the right to leave [the special settlements]". He then established that it was necessary to obtain the acceptance of the Central Committee and TsIK on this specific issue. On 10 January 1935 he contacted Stalin,

[32] Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the GULAG. From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, Yale University 2004, p. 131.

explaining the necessity of adding to the resolution of May 1934 that the "restitution of civil rights does not give labour settlers the right to leave their place of residence". The General Secretary responded "exactly", underlining that restored civil rights were not necessarily a return ticket.[33]

The complexity of this debate was once highlighted further during a very significant event in 1935. From 14-17 November 1935 the Soviet regime held the first congress of the Stakhonovite movement in the Great Hall of the Kremlin. A number of *udarniki*, or model workers from industry, were invited to deliver speeches in celebration of the mineworker, A.G. Stakhanov, who had over-fulfilled his personal quota and by this became a Soviet hero. It is in this context, the concept of Stakhanovite workers originated. Participating in this congress were – aside from a number of specially invited workers – members of the highest cadres of the Soviet system: Stalin, Odzhonikidze, Molotov, Zhdanov, Khrushchev and Kaganovich.[34] It was during this event that a very strange intervention occurred. A Bashkirian, a collective farmer, A.G. Tilba, introduced himself as "a son of a kulak". He had not been invited for the congress, as he was related to these "vicious" enemies of the Soviet state. However, on Yakolev's personal initiative he was invited to participate in this congress of which Tilba was grateful. He stressed: "Although I am a son of a kulak, I will sincerely struggle for the cause of the workers and peasants and for the construction of socialism". Stalin then spontaneously expressed his famous words: "A son does not answer for his father".[35]

Even though the statement became an integral part of Soviet folklore, as most clearly commemorated in Aleksandr Tvardovskii's poem "By the Right of Memory" (1969)[36], it was never reproduced in any public propaganda campaign during the late 1930s. It is therefore unclear what Stalin actually meant by his famous statement.[37]

### *3.1.4 Problems of rehabilitating*

Stalin's statement in November 1935 led to a debate concerning the status of kulak children, which was difficult to assess and implies that even he was not clear on this matter. On 15 December, that is, approximately one month after the Stakhanovite congress, the Central Committee and the SNK proposed in a resolution to allow kulak children and young living in the special settlements access

[33] Ibid.
[34] On this particular congress in November 1935 see the transcript: *Первое всесоюзное совещание рабочих и рабониц СТАХАНОВЦЕВ*, Moscow 1935.
[35] Khlevniuk, 2004, p. 129.
[36] Aleksandr Tvardovskii "По праву памяти" (1969) see pp. 312-320 in I.I. Kore et al. (red.), *С именем Твардовского. Избранные произведения А.Т. Твардовского Страницы биографии поэта Слово о школе*, Moscow 2001.
[37] Fitzpatrick, 1994, p. 240.

to middle and high schools, and also to colleges. The NKVD opposed the rapprochement and used various means to prevent the implementation of the resolution. However, local leaders appear to have considered the initiative as a sign of changing policy, and began sending proposals to Moscow with suggestions as to how the situation of kulak children could be improved. For example, R.I. Eikhe, the chairman of the West Siberian Party Committee, and F.P. Griadinsky, the chairman of the territorial executive Committee, proposed on 26 December:

> ...We think that the children of the special settlers who have reached adulthood before their parents' civil rights have been restored should automatically receive their civil rights if they have broken with the parents and are independently and productively working.
>
> (source: Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the GULAG. From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, Yale University 2004, p. 132-33)

With this also came a proposal on allowing children admission to schools, the Komsomol and similar public institutions.[38] Even if their admission had the condition that they broke away from their family and engaged in work that differed from the tradition of their fathers (probably meaning working in industry) it signified that influential people on the local level believed it was necessary to change policy towards the kulak children. Eikhe and Griadinsky also propose that those special settlers, who already had their civil rights restored, should be allowed to move around between the different districts of Narym – they were not forced to remain in the which settlements they had initially been deported. One of the more interesting arguments was that, as the settlers had often lived more than five years in a particular settlement they had adjusted to the living conditions and would be reluctant to move away. Eikhe and Griadinsky saw no danger in the granting the rehabilitated kulaks the right of movement (though this was not the same as allowing them to leave the region of the special settlements completely).[39] Interestingly the procurator of the USSR, Vyshinky, appears to have responded positively to this proposal, and even Yagoda seems to have been interested in at least discussing it – which would be a counter position to the aforementioned rejection of the NKVD. Though it is important that both these men insisted (like Yagoda and Berman had done earlier in 1935) that rehabilitated kulak settlers could not be allowed to return to their places of origin. That is that rehabilitation was not an automatic return ticket to society, and

[38] Khlevniuk, 2004 , pp. 132-33.
[39] Ibid., p. 133.

continued to have certain reservations attached to it. The SNK and the Central Committee approved the above proposal from Eikhe and Griadinsky, and on 17 January 1936 a resolution was passed on the matter with the important deletion of the suggestion for allowing rehabilitated settler to leave the settlements. Children, nonetheless, appear to have received civil rights.[40]

However, the rehabilitation of kulak children was paradoxical, as revealed in a letter of 25 May 1936 addressed to Stalin and Molotov. The letter was written by city secretary of the distant Siberian town of Igarka, V. Ostroumova who advocated for an improvement of the situation of the deported kulak children, and called for further steps to be taken. Even the most enthusiastic kulak children, or the *Stakhanovites*, had not been admitted into the Komsomol, or the local schools, indicating that it was not always enough to "[break] with parents and [work] independently and productively [...]". This also suggests that there was a significant resistance within the Soviet system towards upgrading kulak children to full citizens.[41] Molotov appears to have been in favour of the improvement at this point, because he wrote "agree" to every point in Ostroumova's letter. There is no information on Stalin's position, yet the matter of rehabilitating still appears to have been controversial. The controversy was related to the dilemma of addressing kulak children, and, of course, of trusting them – a paradox, which the Soviet regime never managed to solve.

## 3.2 "A son does not answer for his father"

It is evident from the above that there was no fixed General Line towards kulak children from 1930-36, as there were only marginal adjustments towards this particular group. After having discussed the development in a chronological order, it would be useful to focus more specifically on the political shift in 1934-35 and discuss a possible reason for this.

### *3.2.1 The Three Good Years*

By late 1933 and early 1934 a relaxation was adopted in relation to agriculture following the preceding famine. Naum Jasny terms this as "The Three Good Years", that is a period where the regime toned down its aggressive stance on agriculture and instead strove to implement the transformation by more moderate means.[42] The political terror of the past, most clearly articulated in the dekulakisation campaign, was officially abandoned at the end of 1932, where the numbers of

[40] Ibid., pp. 134-35.
[41] Ibid., p. 135.
[42] Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR*, Stanford 1949.

deported kulaks and individual members of their families dropped from 1.8 to 1.3 million.[43] This clearly indicates a stuttering in this restrictive banishment of people, which would also signify that fewer children lived in the special settlements at this stage. In relation to agriculture as such the Stalinists refined the kolkhoz-system in 1932/33. The peasants were given the possibility to grow crops on private plots and to sell their produce on the kolkhoz-market. The NEP (the New Economic Policy of 1921-27) was never revived; however, the regime clearly chose another policy than the previous draconian confiscation of grain and other agricultural products, which characterised the collectivisation campaign.[44] With this also came some compromises in the treatment of the peasant family, indicating a less severe line where it, within the framework of the collective farms, was possible to protect the private interests – including childrearing – from interference by the state.[45] This did not mean that the Stalinists abandoned their ambition to control the development of the Soviet countryside – on the contrary. The kolkhoz system was another less resource consuming instrument of achieving control. Even if a quasi-market was accepted, and the peasant families given some autonomy, its survival would still be at the mercy of the state.[46] In relation to children, and kulak children in particular, we can also see that the decrease of repression did not necessarily mean a complete abandonment of discrimination – it was not a return to the petty-bourgeois peasant family.[47]

Why did this shift happen? And, why did the Soviet state supposedly introduce this calmer policy in 1933? One possibility is that the state, in its revision of the previous year, were reconsidering the necessity of using terror in order to obtain control of the countryside. After all, the famine had if not ended the peasant resistance then weakened it significantly, which also made the peasantry more cooperative.[48] The starvation of 1932-33 may have served more or less the same purpose as the deportations of 1930-32: namely to repress and discipline the most rebellious elements of the peasantry.[49] Sheila Fitzpatrick states that resistance remained in one significant form after 1933 –

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[43] R.W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger*, London 2003, p. 47.
[44] Stephan Merl, "Bilanz der Unterwerfung – die soziale und ökonomische Reorganisation des Dorfes" pp. 119-145 in Manfred Hildermeier (ed.) *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg Neue Wege der Forschung*, München 1998, p. 122-129.
[45] Ibid., pp. 138-39.
[46] Ibid., p. 142.
[47] David L. Hoffmann, "Was There a "Great Retreat" from Soviet Socialism? Stalinist Culture Reconsidered" pp. 651-674 in *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* Volume 5, Number 4 (Fall 2004) p. 656.
[48] D'Ann Penner, "Stalin and the *Ital'ianka* of 1932-1933 in the Don Region" pp. 27-68 in *Caheirs du Monde Russe*, 39 (1-2) janvier-juin 1998, pp. 40ff.
[49] Michael Ellman, "The Role of Leadership Perceptions and of Intent in the Soviet Famine of 1931-1934" pp. 823-841 in *Europe-Asia* Studies, Vol. 57, No. 6, September 2005, p. 831.

the form of passive resistance.[50] However, she also notes that it was not the violent uprising of 1929-30. Consequently, the Soviet state did not need to respond to the situation in the same aggressive manner as before – in other words, it did not need to set an example by deporting kulaks or by starving the peasantry. Instead, it could concentrate on stabilising the kolkhoz system, which would achieve its initial goal for lower prices: namely the control of the development within agriculture. Therefore, the Soviet state won the battle against the peasantry in 1933, and could celebrate it during the "Congress of Victors" in January 1934.[51]

The 17th Party Congress also offers another explanation to the softer line towards society. Whereas the previous years had been characterised as a struggle of interest between the centre of Moscow and local authorities of the Soviet Union, a clearer harmonising happened at this point. Stalin's personal power was affirmed and no unpleasant issues, such as the previous years' famine, were discussed during the congress.[52] Stalin and his "henchmen" were at the peak of their power; violent resistance from the peasantry was eliminated and local officials did not oppose the General Line to the same extent as previously. The argument is not that society in 1934 was dominated completely by a mammoth state, but rather that the central government had won the struggle of power. Under these circumstances it is quite plausible that Stalin wanted a relaxation in relation to society, involving a calmer approach towards to kulak children.

### *3.2.2 Besprizornosti*

Another explanation for Stalin's position towards kulak children in 1935 may also be detected within the development of policy towards children in general during these years. It is evident that the forced collectivisation and the diverted dekulakisation had intensified a serious social problem – namely that of homeless children, orphans or in Russia *besprizornye*.[53] The phenomenon was known even before the October Revolution of 1917. However, social collapse, the Civil War of 1918-21, and the famine of 1921-22, made the problem much more acute. Influential leaders, including the head of the OGPU, Feliks Dzerzhinskii, were extremely concerned about the problem, and did much during the 1920s to remove children from the streets and place them in orphanages administrated by the OGPU. Dzerzhinskii is not otherwise known for his humanity, and therefore his engagement reveals something much more interesting: *besprizornye* constituted a serious

[50] Fitzpatrick, 1994, p. 5-7.
[51] Robert Conquest, *Stalin. Breaker of Nations*, London 1998 (3rd edition), p. 177-78.
[52] E.A. Rees, "Republican and Regional Leaders at the XVII Party Congress in 1934" pp. 65-91 in E.A. Rees (ed.), *Centre-local relations in the Stalinist state, 1928-1941*, London 2003.
[53] A. Iu. Gorcheva, *Пресса ГУЛага, 1918-1955*, Moscow 1996, p. 75.

problem, which, if not taken care of, could have seriously destabilised the social order. From the mid to the end of the 1920s the numbers of *besprizornye* dropped; however, by the beginning of the 1930s it again increased dramatically.[54] The level of *besprizornye* already appears to have increased by 1930, when the local authorities of Novosibirsk ordered the Pioneers and Komsomol to develop several plans for assisting these children.[55] By 29 January 1933 (that is at the very same time as famine ravaged the country), the Kremlin issued a decree that urged the local authorities to handle the "battle with the anti-social situation of groups of children on the streets and public places".[56] The problem appears to have been widespread, and not only concentrated in regions to which kulaks and their families had been deported. By 1 January 1935 the People's Commissariat of the State Farms (NKSovkhoz) in Ukraine, discussed the number of orphans within the state-owned farming sector. Apparently the number had soared, and most of the local authorities within the Ukraine were concerned with it.[57] In Dneprepetrovsk on 2 May 1935 it was reported, for example, that from 1 August 1934 to April 1935 the number of homeless children grew from 6200 to 10,873.[58]

A very important reason for this growth must be detected in the fact that the central authorities more or less deliberately depopulated the villages. Part of this was caused by the dekulakisation, where people were banished from their native villages, but a substantial number of peasants also fled, or became *otkhodniki*. Many prosperous and productive peasants reacted to the collectivisation and dekulakisation by selling their equipments and livestock, in order to avoid discrimination, and thereby underwent what officially was termed self-dekulakisation (samoraskulachivanie). Henceforth a substantial number moved to the cities in order to find work, or sent members of the family, usually the eldest sons, so they could find seasonal work. In any case, it implied an enormous outflow of peasants from the villages, and subsequently a tremendous in-migration to various cities and construction sites.[59] The seasonal work changed in its character throughout the 1930s, in comparison to the beginning of the 20th century, as the *otkhodniki* often settled down more permanently in the constructions sites or the larger cities. One of these sites was Magnitagorsk, located in the Urals, where Stephen Kotkin argues that the influx of settlers came primarily from the

[54] For more on besprizornye see: Dorena Caroli, *L'enfance abandonée et délinquante dans la Russie soviétique (1917-1937)*, Paris 2004, Alan M. Ball, *And Not My Soul Is Hardened. Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930*, Berkley 1994, and Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution. Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936*, Cambridge 1993.
[55] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1402, l. 4.
[56] GANO, f. r-895, op. 1, delo 58 l. 14.
[57] TsDAGO f. 1 op. 20, delo 6645, l. 1.
[58] Ibid., ll. 11-12.
[59] David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis. Social Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941*, Ithaca 1994, p. 33.

countryside. Moreover, he asserts that they came not only from the Uralian countryside, but also arrived from villages located further away.[60] Hiroaki Kuromiya, in his work on the Donbass region, recounts that many fleeing peasants arrived in the 1930s, who believed that they could hide away from the central authorities in one of many mines.[61] The massive influx of peasants to Donbass affected tension between the old mining staff and the new comers, which suggest that the in-migration was high.[62] As a majority of the migrating peasants were men, it must necessarily imply that they, provided, of course, they were married and had children, left their families behind. This also means that some children may have been abandoned as a direct result of this outflow from the countryside.

Many of the male members of the families paradoxically returned from the urban areas to the countryside as a reaction to famine in 1932/33. Apparently they believed that all the grain was in the countryside, and hence that it had to be easier to survive this catastrophe. Reality was, of course, much different, but it indicates that many of the *otkhodniki* must have come back at this point – which also implies that some of the fathers of the abandoned children returned.[63] However, the archival material clearly suggests that the situation in the 1930s was tremendously problematic for the situation of homeless children. On 31 May 1935 the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party (CK VKP (b)) and the SNK issued an order on the "liquidation of *besprizornosti* and *beznadvornosti* [in English: street urchins MK.]".[64] The resolution and its contents were discussed on a national level in the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the USSR on 23 July 1935. The report from this meeting indicates concern about the growth in number of homeless children.[65] This can also be seen in a report written by the deputy head of the Ukrainian People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, Z. Katsnelson on 25 November 1935. It was addressed to the two influential secretaries of the Ukrainian Communist Party S.I. Kossior, and P.P. Postyshev and to the chairman of the Ukrainian People's Commissariat (SNK) P.P. Liubchenko. Katsnelson expressed his worries about the development within the orphanages in the countryside.[66] It is clear from several directives issued by Postyshev on 25 November that the situation also concerned him.[67] The

[60] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as Civilization*, London 1995, p. 85.
[61] Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas. A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1860s – 1990s*, Cambridge 1998, p. 157.
[62] Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution. Politics and Workers, 1928-1932*, New York 1988, pp. 235-236.
[63] Gijs Kessler, *The Peasant and the Town. Rural-Urban Migration in the Soviet Union, 1929-40*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis submitted at the European University Institute 2001), pp. 147-148
[64] GANO, f. r-895, op. 1, delo 184, l. 1.
[65] TsDAGO f. 1 op. 20, delo 6645, ll. 14-16.
[66] Ibid., ll. 18-21.
[67] Ibid., ll. 23-32.

question is why the Soviet authorities bothered with this situation, and consequently why it was so important to launch the liquidation of besprizornosti and beznadvornosti in 1935. The answer may be found in a document issued on 21 December 1935 by the executive committee of the West Siberian Krai (Zapsibkraiispolkom) where the liquidation of besprizornosti (that is to remove them from the streets, install them in orphanages and secure a successful education) was defined as an attempt to establish control.[68] The Soviet leadership in 1935 strove to rectify this chaotic situation and therefore achieve the desired development of society.

The problems of besprizornosti diversely affected kulak children in the Soviet regions. Each identification forms of orphans were divided into different categories, whereof the first four were: 1) name, 2) age, 3) place of birth and 4) social position. Based on this it is possible to establish the actual number of kulak children in the orphanages of Western Siberia. In Narym and Tomsk we find that they comprised a significant proportion of the local besprizornye. Of the 21 personal cases being examined for this work, 11 children were explicitly categorised as "members of kulak families".[69] In five cases the homeless children were related to arrested parents, which was not necessarily an outcome of the dekulakisation – in one particular case, for example, the parents were categorised as kolkhozniki (members of a collective farm), and even though it is highly possible that they were arrested as kulaks, this was not given as a specific reason.[70] Four of the children became homeless as a result of the death of either one or both of their parents, which is not further clarified – they were not categorised as "kulaks".[71] Finally one of the children was a son of a worker, who became homeless due to "other mobilisation in the family".[72] This child must have been related to one of the many peasants, who either fled or became *otkhodniki*. Bearing in mind that these numbers are difficult to compare to the general situation of besprizornye in the Soviet Union, as Western Siberia was one of the main regions to which kulaks and their families were deported,[73] the numbers are clear – those children, who with certainty can be related to kulaks comprised 52.4% of the total number of besprizornye in this region. It is likely that of the remaining 45% of children, a majority were classed as besprizornye due to the preceding dekulakisation campaign of 1930-33

[68] GANO, f. r-895, op. 1, delo 184, l. 4.
[69] GATO, f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2806 l. 1; delo 2867, l. 1; delo 2878, l. 2; delo 2894, l. 2; delo 2895, l. 2; delo 2902, l.2; delo 2903; l. 2; delo 2903, l. 2; delo 2904; l. 2; delo 2905; l. 2; delo 2910, l. 2; GATO, f. r-591, op. 1, delo 15, l. 1.
[70] GATO, f. r-591, op. 2, delo 18, l. 8; delo 19, l. 1; delo 22, l. 1; delo 26, l. 6; GATO f. r-591, o. 3, delo 27, l. 6 (the son of the arrested *kolkhozniki*).
[71] GATO, f. r-591, op. 2 delo 16, l. 1; delo 17; delo 28; delo 30.
[72] GATO, f. r-591, op. 2 delo 29, l. 19.
[73] Krasilnikov, 2003, p. 5.

**Table 1**: Categorisation of *besprizornye* in Narym

| **Social category** | **Fixed numbers** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| Kulak children | 11 | 52.4% |
| Children of arrested | 5 | 23.8% |
| Homeless children caused by death of parents | 4 | 19 % |
| Others | 1 | 4.8% |
| Total | 21 | 100 % |

(Source: GATO, f. r-430, op. 3 and GATO, f. r-591, op. 2)

Again, it is important to mention that Narym and Tomsk were regions of the special settlements, which may explain the overrepresentation of kulak children in these local orphanages. However, if we examine the whole region of Western Siberia, including those oblasts where there were no special settlements, we find a very important pattern emerging. Of the 11,394 homeless children living in West Siberian orphanages by 1 January 1937, 2606 were settled in Narym. It would indicate that 22.9% of the total number of besprizornye in Western Siberia lived in the region of the special settlements. If we accept that some of those homeless children, who lived in the countryside of the region, were related to the local peasants classed as kulaks, the proportion of kulak besprizornye may have been even higher. Evidently, we should also recall the fled peasants and the *otkhodniki* when categorising orphans of the countryside. What is important about this statistic is that Narym was the only West Siberian region mentioned explicitly, indicating a special position in relation to the rest of the krai.[74]

GANO f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1607, l. 4.

**Table 2**: Distribution of besprizornye in Western Siberia

| Region | Fixed number |
|---|---|
| City areas | 4,344 |
| Narym | 2,606 |
| Countryside | 4,444 |
| Total | 11,394 |

(Source: GANO f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1607, l. 4)

The dekulakisation campaign must therefore have had an intensifying effect on increasing the level of besprizornye by 1935-37. Having all these reservation in mind, as this distribution is based on material from the regions of the special settlements, it would suggest that when the Soviet regime in 1935 was concerned with re-establishing control of the situation among homeless children they also had to consider its position on orphan kulak children.

*3.2.3 Responses to the social disorder*

Stalin's famous statement in 1935 may have been a response to the growth of orphan kulak children, and thus it would be useful to discussion what the official position was henceforth. It is certain that the Soviet regime continued, even after 1935, to discriminate and dehumanise at least part of the kulak children. To understand this, we need to discuss the complexity of besprizornye further. Homeless kulak children, as besprizornye in general, often survived on theft, begging and prostitution and lived an extremely violent life.[75] One of the main concerns of the OGPU by the mid-1930s was that of fighting organised crime, and this must also have been aimed at marginalised orphan children.[76] By 1934-35 it was reported that hooliganism, juvenile criminality and prostitution was growing alarmingly in the bigger cities, such as Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev. The public response was the edict "On the Struggle against Juvenile Crime" issued on 7 April 1935. One of the consequences of this edict was that the age of criminal responsibility was lowered to 12 years.[77]

This indicated that liquidation of besprizornosti was not only a matter of placing children in orphanages, but also led to a revision of the distinction between adults and children significantly.

[75] Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul Is Hardened. Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930*, Berkeley 1994, pp. 36-44.
[76] David Shearer, "Social Disorder, Mass Repression and the NKVD during the 1930s", pp. 85-117 in Barry McLoughlin and Kevin McDermott, *Stalin's Terror. High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, London 2003, p. 90.
[77] Peter Salomon, *Soviet CriminalJustice Under Stalin*, New York, 1996, p. 197.

This aspect of the liquidation policy towards homeless children is of great importance, since the sharpening of the Juvenile legislation by April 1935 appears also to have been significant for the public approach to deported children (that is, kulak children). On 23 July P.S. Perepelkin, the head of the department of working colonies within the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (OTK NVKD SSSR), discussed the treatment of children sentenced by the edict of 7 April 1935. The NKVD was at this point both responsible for the system of special settlements and the working colonies used for the incarceration of children. The latter type of imprisonment was divided into three different categories and contained children aged 12 years. The colonies ranged from: 1) the normal type of colonies, where boys and girls were separated; 2) special colonies for boys and girls; and finally 3) isolation prisons belonging to the national NKVD prison system (although in Moscow this was administrated by the local NKVD committee of the oblast). The children living in these colonies were categorised as: 1) "socially neglected"; 2) children who required re-education; 3) besprizornye and others.[78]

Kulak children, and especially those living in the special settlements, answered to all three categories for inmates in the working colonies as classified by the head of the OTK NKVD SSSR. This implies three things: firstly that the orphan kulak children living in Narym and other regions for the special settlements, were most likely placed in these working colonies if sentenced by the edict; secondly that at least some of them were as young as 12 years old and could be punished with internment in an isolation prison; thirdly at least some of the kulak children remained to be punished by legal measures, also after Stalin had expressed his view on the distinction between sons and fathers. While it is certainly true that not all kulak children were incarcerated into these working colonies, those living in deportation comprised a majority of the local besprizornye. Certainly, some of those children being tried by the edict were hardcore criminals, but some of the victims might just have been those, who unfortunately became besprizornye as a result of the preceding dekulakisation campaign.

On 29 July 1935 Yagoda elaborated upon the purposes of these working colonies and defined the following five aspects:

II. Purposes of the working colonies

- The basis of working education and the material basis for covering all expenses in the colony is the industry organised within each colony.

[78] Vilenskii, 2002, pp. 194-195.

• Industrial training in the colony should be organised in such a way that each person before leaving the colony, should have obtained professional qualifications in one field or another.

• Each person educated [in Russian: *воспитанник*] from the moment of his arrival in the colony, whether he belongs to the category of *kandidat* or members of the colony [in Russian: *член колонии*], must be attached to one of the industries in the colony (industrial workshop, business or agriculture).

• The salary in the colonies is to be established on piece rate and by taking into account the expenses of covering the price for monthly maintenance, the members of the colony receive full payment and the payment of the *kandidat* is paid to their personal account, and can, in some cases, be paid directly to them with the permission of the head of the colony and by the amount decided by him.

• For the best workers there is organised teaching in social, general educational and industrial disciplines.

The purpose of the colonies is to attract all its members and *kandidaty* to study

(Source: Vilenskii et. at., 2002, p. 196)

From these instructions there was limited change in the treatment of excluded children, simply because those as young as 12 years old, who were interned in the settlements in 1932 and in working colonies in 1935, were used basically for the same purpose: their working power was used to promote industrialisation. Whether this changed for kulak children after November 1935 is possible, however, the working colonies for minors still existed in 1938 and were used for the same purpose as previously – to fulfil the order of 31 May 1935 and thereby to liquidate *besprizornosti* and *beznadzornosti*.[79] This could have been a coincidence, but it is worth mentioning that at least some kulak children must have been exposed to incarceration even after Stalin's statement. On the one hand, the regime appeared to have treated kulak children as any other Soviet children, but they would, on the other hand, always be approached with suspicion. Being paranoid as it was, the Soviet system expected that kulak children always would be hostile towards the state: the experiences of especially deported kulak children only intensified such believe. Having asserted this, it can hardly surprise that the Soviet system continued to discriminate and to also dehumanise the kulak children.

[79] Ibid., p 301.

*3.2.4 The Round-up of Former kulaks*

Another element of the discrimination would be the launching of mass operations in the summer of 1937. The round-up of former "kulaks" and other criminals emphasises that the terror was not just aimed at certain high cadre individuals, but affected a substantial number of non-political groups in Soviet society.[80] On 30 July 1937 Ezhov issued Order No. 00447 "On the operation for the repression of former kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements", which initiated a round-up of socially unwanted elements. Regarding the measures of this campaign the order established that:

> 1. All repressed kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements were divided into two categories:
>
> - In the first category belongs all remaining of the most hostile of the former elements. They are objects for immediate arrest, and, after their case has been tried by the *troika*, shot.
> - In the second category belongs all remaining of the less active elements, who nonetheless are still hostile elements. They are to be arrested and placed in camps for periods from 8 to 10 years, and the most vicious and socially dangerous of these, are to be locked in prison for a period decided by the *troika*.
>
> (source: Оперативный приказ народного комиссара внутриних дел Союза С.С.Р № 00447 «об операции по репрессированию бывших кулаков, уголовников и др. антисоветских элементов», Moscow, 30 June 1937 l. 4 – my underlining MK).[81]

In other words, the Soviet government was apparently interested in those "kulaks", and their families, who belonged to the original first and second category of the dekulakisation campaign – the third category is not mentioned in this order.

Immediately after these instructions Ezhov issued quotas for the numbers of first and second category in the different republics and autonomous republics of the Soviet Union. The quota for arrest had a total figure of approximately 270,095 individuals from 64 different regions, which were divided into either of the two categories – with the majority coming from the second category. Moscow oblast was the region that had the largest number of arrested people with a total of 35,000; the first category comprised 5,000, whereas the second 30,000 – that is the second category was

[80] M. Junge and R. Binner, *Как террор стать «большим». Секретный приказ № 00447 и технология его исполнения*, Moscow 2003, p. 9.

[81] This document has very generously been lent to the author in its original version by *Memorial* in Tomsk.

remarkably larger than the first. In the Ukraine, divided into Kharkov, Kiev, Vinnitsa, Donetsk, Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk, Chernigovsk and Moldova (being included into this region), 28,800 people were to be arrested. 8,000 of these belonged to the first category, whereas the second category comprised 20,800 people – the same pattern as in Moscow. Another pattern is that apart from the oblast surrounding the larger Soviet cities, Moscow, Leningrad, and Sverdlovsk, Ukraine, Western Siberia and the GULAG were the regions hardest affected by the new round-up. This would imply that the campaign of 1937 was specifically aimed at the agricultural regions and those areas and cities where the previously-designated kulaks and former special settlers lived or were incarcerated. It is also worth mentioning that the regime arrested first category kulaks in the GULAG, which also suggests that the NKVD was re-arresting and executing people, who were already incarcerated.[82]

**Table 3** Samples for the NKVD quotas for those to be rounded-up by Order No. 00447 on June 1937

| | First category | Second category | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Moscow oblast | 5,000 | 30,000 | 35,000 |
| Leningrad oblast | 4,000 | 10,000 | 14,000 |
| Sverdlovsk oblast | 4,000 | 6,000 | 10,000 |
| West Siberia | 5,000 | 12,000 | 17,000 |
| Ukraine SSR | 8,000 | 20,800 | 28,800 |
| Kharkov oblast | 1,500 | 4,000 | 5,500 |
| Kiev oblast | 2,000 | 3,500 | 5,500 |
| Vinnitsa oblast | 1,000 | 3,000 | 4,000 |
| Donetsk oblast | 1,000 | 3,000 | 4,000 |
| Odessa oblast | 1,000 | 3,500 | 4,500 |
| Dnepropetrovsk oblast | 1,000 | 2,000 | 3,000 |
| Chernigovsk oblast | 300 | 1,300 | 1,600 |
| Moldova oblast | 200 | 500 | 700 |
| NKVD camps | 10,000 | | 10,000 |
| Total of all oblasti, krai, ASSR and SSR | 78,095 | 192,000 | 270,095 |

(Source: Оперативный приказ народного комиссара внутриних дел Союза С.С.Р № 00447 «об операции по репрессированию бывших кулаков, уголовников и др. антисоветских элементов», Moscow, 30 June 1937, ll. 6-7)

[82] Cristopher Joyce, "Recycled Victims: The Great Terror in the Komi ASSR" pp. 191-220 in Melanie Ilic (ed.), *Stalin's Terror Revisited*, London 2006, pp. 215-216.

The numbers were incomplete, as certain regions of the Soviet Union were not included, and the order gave the local authorities the right to raise the number of executions. This implies that the actual number of executed was much higher than the total 78,095 suggests.[83] Both Luneev and Popov give a number of 353,074 death sentences in 1937, which is significantly higher than the above quota. Yet it is unclear whether the executions only concern those being rounded up as former kulaks or if it also includes other groups, being executed during the Great Purges.[84] The main problem is that the quota does not represent one specific group, as it was a round up of all "social aliens". This would also suggest that it is difficult to define the "social group" being rounded-up, as the possibilities of who they actually were are manifold. It is, for example, unclear how many of them were designated as "kulaks", as there is no indication of the quota of arrested within the system of the special settlements. Furthermore, it can be established that whereas 916,787 lived in the settlements by 1937, this dropped to 877,651 in 1938, but rose again to 938,522 in 1939.[85] The drop from 1937 to 1938 is particularly interesting, as it implies that Order No. 00447 not necessarily meant that the number of stigmatised "kulaks" in the settlements rose – at least the number of special settlers did not rise until 1939. The stigmatised kulaks could, of course, have been sent to another sector of the GULAG system in 1937 and 1938, however, there is no specific information about this. The quota in Order No. 00447 might have represented escaped special settlers, former kulaks (who had been released from that system of special settlements by the mid-1930s) or even already incarcerated kulaks, but it is significant that the data is not clear on this matter.

The main concern is how Order No. 00447 is to be understood, and subsequently why the Soviet regime decided to engage in these mass operations. It is generally accepted that the order largely reflected a desire to strengthen the control of society in the preparation for war, which had always been an ambition of the Soviet leadership, but which was particularly sharpened from 1933. The local authorities spoke only rarely about social chaos and instability in 1937, but would instead show concern about "the formation of organised opposition". Based on the many experiences with war and civil war, the Soviet leadership was convinced that an organised opposition inevitably

[83] Oleg Khlevnyuk, "The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937-1938"pp. 158-176 in Julian Cooper, Maureen Perrie and E.A. Rees, *Soviet History 1917-53*, London 1995, p. 162.
[84] V.V. Luneev, *Преступность XX века. Мировой криминолический анализ*, Moscow 1997, p. 180 (Table 1) and V.P. Popov, "Государственный террор в советской России 1923-1953 гг. (источники и их интерпретация)" pp. 20-31 *Отечественные архивы*, 1992, Volume 2, p. 28 (Table 3) and p. 29. note *.
[85] V.N. Zemskov, *Спецпереселенцы в СССР 1930-1960*, Moscow 2005, pp. 21-22.

would launch an attack on the state. From the experiences with the Civil War in Spain in 1936, the Soviet government only knew to well what organised opposition groups could achieve, and the creation of a Fifth column had to be prevented at any cost.[86] That is Order No. 00447 intensified the above criminalisation of society, and depicted certain groups (including former "kulaks") as particularly dangerous.

### *3.2.5 Kulak children and Order No. 00447*

Regarding kulak children Order No. 00447 was not explicit. The document discusses the fate of the arrested families, which again appears to be ambiguous. Those members of the family who did not conduct anti-Soviet activities were not to be repressed. It is at the same time established that those members of the family conducting "anti-Soviet" activities were to be arrested, tried by the troika and placed either in camps or special settlements (trudposelenie). Furthermore, the document reads that families of the first category arrested, living in Moscow, Leningrad, Tblisi, Baku, Rostov-on-Don, Tagentor and the regions surrounding Sochi (Stalin's Black Sea dacha), Gagry and Sukhumi, were to be expelled. Families of both the first and second category were to be kept under systematic observation.[87] This clearly supports the argument of the wide range of political terror from 1936-38 as a phenomenon directed against society: ordinary people, and even their children, at this point could not be sure, when or if they would be stigmatised and arrested as "enemies of the people".

The treatment of kulak children may be deduced from Ezhov's order "On the operation of repression of wives and children of traitors of the motherland" of 15 August 1937. Though this order was aimed at the families of the members of the political elite, it is important to remember that the campaigns against the kulaks and the Great Purges within the political elite were parallel operations. We can in this document detect a distinction of children: that is some were considered more dangerous than other. The indicator of this was their age. The children were divided into four categories: babies (who were allowed to remain with their mothers) infants from 1 to 1½ and 3, children from 3 to 15, and adolescents 15 years old and older. The last category, that is the adolescents, were automatically arrested and termed "socially dangerous". These were placed in camps, working colonies or homes for special re-education. The third category – children from 3-15 – were to be placed in orphanages administrated by NKPros (People's Commissariat of Education).

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[86] Oleg Khlevniuk, "The Reasons for the "Great Terror": the Foreing-Political Aspect" pp. 159-169 in Silvio Pons and Andrea Romano (ed.), *Russia in the Age of Wars, 1914-1945*, Milano 2000, Shearer, 2003, pp. 104-107 and Junge and Binner, 2003, p. 242 ff.

[87] Оперативный приказ народного комиссара внутриних дел Союза С.С.Р № 00447 «об операции по репрессированию бывших кулаков, уголовников и др. антисоветских элементов», Moscow, 30 June 1937, l. 8.

The second category – infants from 1-1½ to 3 – became the responsibility of the NKZdrav (People's Commissariat of Health Care). Regarding the preparation for the placing of children from the age of 1 to 15 years, that is both the second and the third category, the document reads:

> 24) In every city involved in the operation, special measures to establish:
> a) reception and dispatch centres where the children will be taken immediately after their mothers' arrest and from which children will then be sent on to orphanages
> ...
> 30) At the reception and dispatch centre the children are received by the manager or head of the children reception of OTK NKVD and a special selected expert of UGB [State Security Service MK].
>
> Each accepted child is registered in a special book, and his or her documents are sealed in a separate envelope.
>
> The children are then divided into groups, depending on where they are sent, and taken in groups by specially selected workers to the orphanages of NKPros, where they are handed over with their documents to the manager on his personal signature.
> 31) Children under 3 are handed over personally to the manager of the orphanages or nurseries of NKZdrav on their personal signature. The birth certificate is handed over with the child
> ...
> 33) Supervision of the political attitudes of children of the convicted, and of their education and upbringing, is assigned to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the republics and to the heads of the districts and oblast offices of the NKVD.
>
> (Source: A.I. Kokurin and N.V. Petrov et.al., *ГУЛАГ (Главное Управление лагерей) 1917-1960,* Moscow 2000 pp. 108-9).[88]

Such instruction evidently signified that the placement of children in these orphanages, which also included those, as young as 1 to 1½ years old, was akin to imprisonment, and this is supported by the fact that the registration involved photographing the child, with a number of registration hung

[88] This document is translated to English in: Alexander N. Yakolev, *A Century of Violence in Soviet Russia*, New Haven 2002, pp. 30-31.

around their necks and the taking of their fingerprints for easier identification.[89] The NKVD was also assigned the task of "supervision of the political attitudes of children", emphasising that the Soviet authorities still would be sceptical about the political observation of these children.

It became increasingly important in 1938 to maintain control of the enemy children (including kulak children). On 11 February 1938 the NKVD discussed methods for strengthening the network of informers within the special working colonies designated for young children.[90] It is important to remember that this part of the round-up of former kulaks was not just a matter of placing children in orphanages and re-educating them: some of these families had previously, less than ten years before, experienced the dekulakisation campaign. Also, which is more important, most of the fathers had just been shot. Again the same people, and their families, had to prepare themselves for the breaking up of their intimate sphere – even brothers and sisters were separated during these placements.[91]

### *3.2.6. Kulak children and passports*

The escalation of political repression of former "kulaks" in June 1937 seems to have had a negative impact on the Soviet treatment of kulak children and young. Yet it is important that this still remained ambiguous, even when terror reached its peak – that is that even when the situation was most intense, certain people in the Soviet leadership would argue for the necessity of rehabilitating kulak children. The dilemma becomes particularly clear in the discussion on passports and kulak children, which occurred in 1938-1939. The significance of passports was emphasised in 1932-33, when the Soviet regime introduced them in order to control the movement of people. Because of the famine, 1932 had been particularly dramatic, with people moving in huge numbers from the countryside to the cities. With the passport regulations introduced on 5 January 1933, the regime had means whereby it could control who lived in the cities – if a person did not have a passport, it was not possible to gain a residence permit.[92] Special settlers could not attain this passport when it was initially introduced.[93] By September 1938 the Soviet government discussed the right of movement of exiled kulaks, which on 22 October resulted in a decision to release children from the special settlements when reaching the age of 16 – provided, of course,

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[89] Corina Kuhr "Children of "Enemies of the People" as victims of the Great Purges" pp. 209-220 in *Cahier du Monde Russe*, 39 (1-2), janvier-juin 1998, p. 209.
[90] Vilenskii et al., 2002, pp. 278-79.
[91] Kuhr, 1998, p. 212.
[92] Fitzpatrick, 1994, pp. 92-95.
[93] Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War. Stalin's Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives*, London 1994, pp. xii, 29-31

they could be trusted. This would also indicate that they gained a passport and thereby had the right to move to the cities and receive an education.[94] Yet most kulak children older than 16 years had since August 1937 belonged to the group of "socially dangerous", which might explain that the GULAG administration stressed on 19 February 1939 that:

> In relation to the issuing of passports to working settlers, who leave the workings settlements for studying it must be kept in mind that in accordance with the SNK SSSR decision of 22.10.1938 it is illegal to live in the places of education [...] the regulation for the release from the working settlements to study remains in agreement with the current regulation no. 2663 of the SNK SSR and CK VKP(b): a working settler who temporarily (in a specific period) is released for submitting an entrance exam to a given institute, is afterwards obliged to return to the settlements.
>
> (Source: V.P. Danilov and Sergei Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной, 1939-1945*, Novosibirsk 1996, p. 17.)

This means that the passports issued for kulak children after 22 October 1938 had special restrictions for residency: a kulak child or adolescent could, in other words, only leave the system of settlements for a shorter period for education. The specification from the GULAG administration in 1939 may not have had anything to do with the NKVD order of August 1937 on the treatment of wives and children of traitors of the motherland, but at least it suggests that the Soviet regime never came to a complete clarification on its view on kulak children and young. It would imply that it was never an unreserved rehabilitation of this particular group, emphasising that despite ongoing debates throughout the 1930s kulak children remained secondary citizens even at the end of the decade. Hence any civil rights of kulak children were contradictory, and the shift by the mid-1930s did not affect any fundamental changes in their legal position. Also it means that the Soviet regime would always consider kulak children and young as potentially dangerous, which, of course, had essential implications for their future possibilities.

[94] Khlevniuk, 2004, p. 262.

## 3.3 The Blatnoi – a way of responding

How did kulak children respond to these experiences? Were they passive or did they react to the dehumanisation? It is obvious that the orphan kulak children living in the Soviet penal system were brought up under extremely harsh circumstances, which must have shaped their behaviour significantly. In his famous book *The GULAG Archipelago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn spoke of a certain category of "Blatnoi" or "blatari" existing in the Soviet penal system by the 1940s. They were organised within an informal network, had specific tattoos on their bodies, developed a certain language and had a detailed code of honour. Each member belonged to a complex structure parallel to society, implying that these thieves were well organised.[95] The "Blatnoi" is rooted in the broader Russian term of "Blat", which refers to an informal network exiting parallel to the official system of control. It was an immensely widespread phenomenon in Soviet society, also in the Stalin era, and its significance can be summarised in the sentence: "*Blat* is higher than Stalin". "Blat" would refer to a black market economy – that is an economy outside the control of the state, but it was also a very specific way of living parallel to the official life.[96]

The "Blatnoi" refers to a criminal organisation emerging in the Soviet penal system by the beginning of the 1930s. Often "Blatnoi" and "vory-v-zakony" (thieves-in-law) are used as synonyms, and signifies criminal organisations within the Soviet camp system, who consistently opposed and undermined the authorities.[97] There was an enormous rivallery within the camps system between the different fractions of underworld organisations. The main opponents of the Blatnoi was the *suki* (the bitches), who was considered traitors. The conflict between the Blatnoi and the suki escalated from 1949-51 in what was known as the bitches' war (such'ia voina), which largely broke down this parallel structure of camps.[98] However, the Blatnoi structure was immensely strong in the 1940s, and often comprised a realistic alternative to the official camp administration.

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[95] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The GULAG Archipelago. 1918-1956*, London 1974, pp. 503-506.
[96] On the "Blat" phenomenon see: Joseph S. Berliner, ""Blat" is Higher than Stalin!" pp. 22-31 in *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1953; Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Ecomy of Favours. Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*, Cambridge 1998, p. 3 and 11; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Blat *in Stalin's Time*" pp. 166-182 in. Stephen Loveel, Alena V. Ledeneva and Andrei Rogachevskii (ed.), *Bribery and Blat in Russia. Negotiation Reciprocity from Middle Ages to the 1990s*, London 2000, p. 178.
[97] Frederico Varese, "The society of the Vory-V-Zakone, 1930-1950" pp. 515-538 in *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 39 (4). Octobre-décembre 1998, pp. 516-517 and Andrea Graziosi, "The Great Strikes of 1953 in Soviet Labor Camps in the Accounts of their Participants. A Review" pp. 419-446 *in Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, 33(4), octobre-décember 1992, p. 426.
[98] Graziosi, 1992, p. 426..

The "Blatnoi" phenomenon is fairly understudied, and, for example, it is still uncertain as to wh they were. Federico Varese examines their national and ethnical background, and establishes tha they primarily came from the Russian Soviet Republic and were of Slavic origin.[99] He has however, very little information about their social origin, and it is difficult to decide whether the dekulakisation process had an intensifying effect on the phenomenon – the only thing in his writing suggesting that this might have been the case, is that the origin of the Blatnoi in the camps is dated to the beginning of the 1930s. Graziosi likewise suggests that the life as a *spetspereselentsy* had hardened a significant number of the camp inmates during the 1930s.[100] We know from contemporary writing of, for example, Calvin B. Hoover that: "In some cases the more desperate kulaki turned to banditry".[101] This implies that most kulaks reacted to the dekulakisation by becoming thieves or Blatnoi. In Bernhard Roerder's autobiography regarding the situation of the camps by the 1940s Blatnoi are specifically characterised as: "...the children of the kulaks who grew up in the lawlessness of Siberian exile and saw their parents dying around them in the despair produced by homelessness and starvation".[102] This would suggest that kulak children, and more specifically those being deported with their parents, participated in the establishment of the Blatnoi.

In his novel "Blatnoi" from 1971, Mikhail Demin describes his youth in the Soviet penal camp system of the 1940s. Aside from telling the story of his life as a Blatnoi, Demin portrays his family background. He explains how he grew up in the 1930s in a Soviet village outside Moscow, which was mainly inhabited by heroes of the Civil War. In 1937 his uncle (a high level local official) was arrested as an "enemy of the people" as one of the many victims of the Great Purges. His father was certain that sooner or later the same fate would befall upon him as well. And life in the family as well as in the village was immensely affected by this paranoia.[103] Demin's father died before being arrested, knowing that his arrest order had been issued.[104] On a later occasion, in the 1940s, Demin had a talk with some of his fellow Blatnye about the political situation in the Soviet Union, and again it is revealed that they in general originated from high position families – and therefore at some point had experienced the arrest of their parents. One of Demin's friends was called Kostia *Graf*[105], as he was a son of repressed Polish aristocratic family.[106] This text therefore suggests that

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[99] Varese, 1998, p. 522.
[100] Graziosi, 1992. p. 422
[101] Calvin B. Hoover, *The Economic Life of Soviet Russia*, New York 1932 (4th edition), p. 106.
[102] Bernhard Roerder, *Katorga. An aspect of Modern Slavery*, London 1958, p. 96.
[103] Mikhail Demin, *Блатной. Роман* New York 1981, pp. 66-69.
[104] Ibid., p. 71.
[105] "Graf" is "count" in Russian
[106] Demin, 1981, p. 195.

some Blatnoi in the Soviet penal camps must have come from families, which had been repressed by the Soviet state during the 1930s – that is that they had either belonged to kulak families or families of the high Soviet cadres.

We know from research done by Alan M. Ball on homeless children or besprizornye in the 1920s that they often were engaged in criminality. Furthermore, it is commonly accepted that the criminal besprizornye were organised in specific gangs and developed a certain language, habits, costumes, conventions and solidarity. The life these children lived was extremely hard and they defended themselves physically against their surroundings.[107] Above, it was established that one of many consequences of the dekulakisation and the later round-up of former "kulaks" was a growing level of besprizornye and orphans. Bearing in mind that these children were meet with hostility from the Soviet regime and that their situation was desperate, it is plausible that they reacted in the same way as besprizornye traditionally had done during the 1920s and even earlier. Therefore, it is also likely that they became criminals, since this was one way of surviving as a child of a social outcast. From this perspective, it is reasonable to suggest that some of the besprizornye kulak children became the Blatnoi, which were spoken of in the Soviet penal system. This is not to argue that every orphan kulak child became the Blatnoi, but some might have responded to the repression of themselves and their parents in this particular manner. It is important to emphasis that those who did become the Blatnoi might have been a minority, even among orphan kulak children.

Although there are no statistics on the social composition of the Blatnoi, which can precisely determine the number of kulak children, it is generally accepted that they came from the orphanages – that is they came from the environment, where kulak children were installed during the incarceration of their parents.[108] Varese asserts that a number of the senior Blatnoi were adolescents as young as 18 years, suggesting that the junior members were even younger.[109] We know from an autobiography, written by a besprizornye, who became a Soviet waif in 1929 (because of the repression of his father), that organised theft was a common way of surviving in the Soviet orphanages. The organisation he was part of was based on a "patrone versus client" relation: the young children carried out the theft and paid fees to older adolescents. If the children were caught during the operation, the older adolescents would help them and would protect them in any ways

[107] Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul Is Hardened. Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930*, Berkeley 1994, pp. 36-38.
[108] The previous political prisoner, Boris Weil, gave this valuable information to the author, after having consulted and discussed the issue with a lawyer from Moscow.
[109] Varese, 1998, p. 516.

possible.[110] Whether this organisation was akin to the structure of Blatnoi can not, however, elaborated from the text. When interviewing for her book on the GULAG, Anna Appelbaum ask a Russian friend to help her finding some of those, who had lived in the orphanages. The frie responded: "Don't [...] we all know what such people became" implying that the kula besprizornye, and other similar orphans, often became members of what Appelbaum terms as th "[...] large and all-embracing criminal class".[111] This implies that some of these children not onl grew up in an atmosphere of criminality in the orphanages, but continued to live a life in the under belly of society. This suggests that at least some kulak children, even if it was only a minority, wer not passive in their interaction with the Soviet state, but instead reacted according to the policy t which they were submitted. The Soviet system criminalised kulak children, most notably whe issuing the edict "On the Struggle against Juvenile Crime" on 7 April 1935, but also in the day-to-day treatment of them in orphanages and other places. And this criminalisation must have detoriated by the round-up of former kulaks in July 1937. If kulak children were not criminal before, they would become so, as a reaction to this criminalisation. There was, as in the case of stigmatising "kulaks" as hostile, a self-fulfilling prophecy to the policy of the Soviet state. It is, nonetheless, important to remember that it based on the current material is difficult to conclude that kulak children comprised the main body of the Blatnoi.

It is possible that the "Blatnoi" was a realistic alternative for at least some kulak children to the oppressing Soviet state – even if these only comprised a smaller percentage of the total number of kulak children. Whether this also meant that blatari, could live a life without any level of interaction with the Soviet state is inconceivable. The Blatnoi structure did not have a central core, like the bureaucracy of the state, binding all of the individual criminal networks together into one coerced entity – instead it was a number of entities working in parallel to one other. Furthermore, the Blatnoi was no longer a realistic alternative by the beginning of the 1950s, when the whole structure was destroyed in the GULAG camp system as a consequence of the aforementioned bitches' war.[112] A substantial number of kulak children also desired, as we shall see later, to be re-integrated into society when that was made possible, so even if some might have been a Blatnoi, he or she would most probably also have strived to gain an education, to be enrolled into the political child and youth organisations and to find a job if that was made possible – this would, after all, be a more prosperous and long-term way of living even for kulak children. Not that they forgot about their life

[110] Nicholas Vionov, *Outlaw. The Autobiography of a Soviet Waif*, London 1955, p. 25 and 28.
[111] Anne Applebaum, *GULAG. A History of the Soviet Camps*, Lodnon 2004, p. 306.
[112] Varese, 1998, p. 526.

in exclusion, but they had to invent survival strategies in a society that would generally be hostile towards them.

# 4. The living conditions of kulak children during deportation

While the Soviet authorities rarely spoke about kulak children, or even completely ignored them, during the initial phase of dekulakisation in the winter of 1930, they became increasingly concerned about their fate by the mid-1930s. A significant reason for this was (as mentioned in chapter 3) the terrible living conditions under which these deported children lived. A question is whether the experiences of the kulak children were radically different from what children generally experienced in these years. Since famine tormented the Soviet Union in 1932-33 and infant mortality generally was high, it is only natural to discuss differences and similarities between the experiences of kulak children and Soviet children as such.

Given that the devastating fate of kulak children primarily arose from the policy of deportation, it is mainly the living conditions of kulak children in the system of the special settlements, which will be examined. Our main concern is children of the first and second category kulaks. By following the general development of the Soviet Union, and discussing as to whether the development in the special settlements was significantly different from what children and adults experienced in society a whole, the living conditions of third category kulak children will also be addressed – even if this appears as a secondary issue.

## 4.1 The demographic situation of Soviet countryside in the 1930s

V.P. Danilov asserted that by the time of the First World War (1914-1917) the population of the area, which later became the Soviet Union, comprised 139.3 million. Of this 114.5 million, or 82.3%, lived in rural areas.[1] In the pioneering work of E.Z. Volkov of 1930, we can find a similar figure, as he asserted that of a total 140.9 million, 115.3 million, or 81.8%, lived in the countryside by 1918.[2] Despite urbanisation during the 1920s the distribution between the rural and urban areas was more or less unaltered by the end of the decade. In 1930 126.2 million Soviet citizens lived in the rural areas (80.7%) while 30.2 million lived in the cities (19.3%).[3]

[1] V.P. Danilov, *Советская Доколхозная Деревня: Население, Землепользование, Хозяйство*, Moskva 1977, p. 19.
[2] E.Z. Volkov, *Динамика Народнаселения СССР. За Восемьдесят лет*, Moscow 1930, p. 208 (table 115).
[3] Danilov, 1977, pp. 21-22.

**Table 1**: Estimation of population growth in the Rural and Urban areas from 1924-1930 (in millions)

| Year | Rural | Urban | Total | Rural proportion in percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1924 | 115,0 | 22,4 | 137,4 | 83.7 |
| 1926 | 118,6 | 25,0 | 143,6 | 82.6 |
| 1928 | 122,9 | 27,5 | 150,4 | 81.7 |
| 1930 | 126,2 | 30,2 | 156,4 | 80.7 |

(Source: Danilov, 1977, p. 21)

The distribution between the rural and urban areas changed from 1926 to 1937, as a result of the collectivisation and industrialisation campaigns – in part because of an extensive urbanisation, especially in the early 1930s. The reintroduction of the internal passport by 1933 was largely a response to this dramatic situation.[4] The growth rate of the cities in the years from 1926 to 1937 was according to V.B. Zhiromskaya 208.7%, whereas the rural population fell to 90.8% of its 1926 level.[5] According to her calculation this implied that 73 million lived in the cities by 1937, whereas 122.1 millions remained in the rural areas.[6] The distribution had therefore changed from 19.3% and 80.7% in 1930 to 37.5% and 62.5% in 1937 – even if the rural population still comprised a majority of the total Soviet population, the increase in the cities was remarkable. It is, of course, important to recall that Soviet society remained rural until 1959.

**Table 2**: Estimation of growth in the rural and urban areas in 1937 (in million)

| | Distribution in fixed number | Distribution in pct. | Growth rate in pct. from 1926-1937 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural | 122,1 | 62.5 | 90.9 |
| Urban | 73 | 37.5 | 208.7 |

(Source: Zhiromskaya, 2004, p. 68 and 73)

[4] For more on the rural migration and the passport regulation see: Gijs Kessler, *The Peasant and the Town. Rural-Urban Migration in the Soviet Union, 1929-40* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted at the European University Institute in 2001), chp. 3.
[5] V.B. Zhiromskaya, *Демографическая история россии в 1930-е годы*, Moscow 2001, p. 68.
[6] Ibid., p.73.

*4.1.1 Age distribution in the countryside*

Danilov calculated that in 1926 the rural child population (those younger than 15 years) comprised 38.9% or 46.9 million of a total 120.7 million.[7]

**Table 3**: Estimation of rural age distribution on 17 December 1926 (in millions)

| Age/distribution | Fixed numbers | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 0-4 years | 19,2 | 16.1 |
| 5-9 years | 13,2 | 10.9 |
| 10-14 years | 14,5 | 12.0 |
| > 15 years | 73,8 | 61.0 |
| Total | 120,7 | 100 |

(Source: Danilov, 1977, p. 24, Table 2)

From 1926-1937 according to Zhiromskaya, the number of children younger than 15 rose in the countryside.[8] Rural children up to the age of one year, comprised 3.21% of a total of 122.1 million (3.9 million); those from 1 to 4 years comprised 8.88% (10.8 million); while those from 5 to 9 years comprised 14.22% (17.4 million); and finally those children from 10-14 years comprised 13.46% (16.4 million). Children therefore comprised a total of 48.5 million of the total 122.1 million rural citizens in 1937 (that is 39.7%).[9]

**Table 4**: Estimation of rural age distribution in 1937 (in millions)

| Age/distribution | In fixed number | In pct. |
|---|---|---|
| > 1 | 3,9 | 3.21 |
| 1-4 | 10,8 | 8.88 |
| 5-9 | 17,4 | 14.22 |
| 10-14 | 16,4 | 13.46 |
| < 15 | 73,6 | 60.27 |
| Total | 122,1 | 100 |

(Source: Zhiromskaya, 2004, p. 96 (Table 14))

[7] Danilov, 1977, pp. 24-25.
[8] Zhiromskaya, 2004, pp. 96-97.
[9] Ibid., p. 96 (Table 14).

Zhiromskaya's data reveals that children were not unaffected by the development of the 1930s. For example, it is important to note that the group of children from 0 to 4 years old dropped from a total of 19.2 million in 1926, to 14.7 million in 1937. There are several explanations for such a development; one would be the famine of 1932-33, which had a devastating impact on infant mortality. Another explanation is the drop in the birth rate, experienced in the country at large during the 1930s.

*4.1.2 The number of "kulaks"*

This leads us to consider how big a proportion of the total rural population was designated as "kulak", and consequently how many kulak children we are talking about for the whole dekulakisation. The question is difficult to answer precisely, as the "kulak" concept was flexible, arbitrary and largely a political construction used in order to legitimise Soviet policy in the countryside. Nikolai Ivnitskii, using two contemporary Soviet investigations of 1927 and 1929, calculates that whereas 3.9% of the total peasant households in the Soviet Union could be characterised as "kulaks" in 1927 it had dropped to 2.3% in 1929. In comparison, he states, that the batraki in the same period dropped from 9.8% to 8.9%; the bednoty dropped from 22.9% to 21.6%; whilst the middle peasants (seredniaki) rose from 63.4% to 67.2%. What is striking about these statistics is the regional variation; whereas the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR) corresponds to the general statistic of the Soviet Union, regions like the Northern Caucasus and Siberia differed remarkably. In the Northern Caucasus, for example, kulak households comprised 5.7% in 1927, but dropped to 2.4% in 1929. In Siberia a similar development occurred, where 6.7% of the households in 1927 were categorised as kulaks, this dropped to 1.8% in 1929.[10] Such developments indicate that the proportion of kulak households had dropped significantly in the very same year as the policy of liquidating the kulak as a class was launched.

[10] Nikolai Ivnitskii, *Репрессивная политика Советской власти в деревне (1928-1933 гг.)*, Moskva 2000 p. 96.

**Table 5**: Social construction of the countryside according to Ivnitskii

| General Development of the USSR | Kulak | Middle Peasant | Poor Peasant | Batraki |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1927 | 3.9% | 63.4% | 22.9% | 9.8% |
| 1929 | 2.3% | 67.2% | 21.6% | 8.9% |
| Regional differences: Siberia | | | | |
| 1927 | 5.7% | | | |
| 1929 | 2.4% | | | |
| North Caucasus | | | | |
| 1927 | 6.7% | | | |
| 1929 | 1.8% | | | |

(Source: Ivnitskii, 2000, p. 96)

There was considerable disagreement about the actual number of kulaks among the Soviet authorities, and the estimation differed depending on which state agency or research organisation undertook the investigation. Whereas 3.9% of a total 25 million households was the official estimate for the "kulak" population in 1927, the People's Commissariat of Agriculture (NKZem) later that year claimed that the kulak percentage was 4.2%. A year later, in 1928, Stalin argued that the estimation should be raised to 5%.[11] Stalin thereby gave the top estimate, suggesting that not even the most radical within the Soviet regime would claim that the designated "kulaks" comprised more than 5% of the total peasantry. This also means that the number of "kulaks" was relatively small. The official number of kulak households differed from 780,000 at the lowest in 1927 to 1.2-1.3 million in 1929. The latter estimation was made by Molotov, and does not include the categories of "kulak henchmen" (podkulachniki) – that is middle and poor peasants being placed alongside "kulaks" for showing sympathy – nor well-to-do peasants (zazhitochnye). This necessarily increased the number of those peasants who were designated as class enemies, during the forced collectivisation of Soviet agriculture. By 19 February 1933, when dekulakisation was about to end,

[11] Moshe Lewin, "Who was the Soviet Kulaks?" pp. 121-141 in Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System*, London 1985, p. 129.

Stalin argued that the zazhitochnye had comprised 8-10% of the total Soviet peasantry at the beginning of the campaign. According to such estimation 3 million households, or between 7 and 8 million individuals (adults as well as children) were designated as "kulaks" and zazhitochnye by the Soviet regime.[12] The attack upon the designated "kulaks", was therefore aimed at least 1.2-1.3 million households or, according to Moshe Lewin, 5-6 million individuals – adults as well as children.[13] Danilov lowers this number to 1 million households, or between 4-5 million individuals.[14] Either way, this implies that an average kulak family comprised of 4-5 people, meaning two adults and between two and three children.

Davies and Wheatcroft establish that from 1930 to 1933 between 5.1 – 5.8 million people were categorised as either first, second, or third category kulaks. They divide the dekulakised into the following groups (in million persons):

| | |
|---|---|
| 1) Exiled outside their own region (first or second category kulaks) | 2.1 |
| 2) Exiled within their own region (third category kulaks) | 2-2.5 |
| 3) "Dekulakised themselves" (self-dekulakisation) | 1-1.25 |

(source: R.W. Davies and S.G. Wheatcroft "Population" in R.W. Davies, Mark Harrison and S.G. Wheatcroft (ed.), *The economic transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 68)

Based on these figures it is possible to calculate that between 4 and 6 million individuals – adults as well as children – were designated as "kulaks" during the 1930s. It is important to remember that the first category kulaks suffered more than any of the other categories, as they were treated much harder – often even executed. Luneev argues that 208,069 individuals were sentenced for counterrevolutionary activity in 1930, which drops to 33,539 in 1931, raises to 141,919 in 1932 and rockets dramatically in 1933 to 239,664.[15] Popov gives similar numbers for 1930, 1932 and 1933, but raises the 1931 figure to 180,696 sentences.[16] Thus between 623,191 and 770,348 were sentenced for counterrevolutionary activity from 1930 to 1933. These numbers must also have included the first category kulaks, although there is no clear specification in the statistics. However, the data at least provides us an idea of their total number.

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[12] S.I. Golotik and V.V. Minaev, *Население и власть. Очерки демографической истории СССР 1930-х годов*, Moscow, 2004, p. 115.
[13] Lewin, 1985, p. 129.
[14] Golotik and Minaev, 2004, p. 115.
[15] V.V.Luneev, *Преступность XX века. Мировой криминологический анализ*, Moscow 1997, p. 180 (Table 1).
[16] V.P. Popov, "Государственный террор в советской России 1923-1953 гг. (источники и их интерпретация)" pp. 20-31 *Отечественные архивы*, 1992, Volume 2, p. 28 (Table 3).

The question is how many of the dekulakised were children: rural children in general comprised approximately 38% of the total population, a number which appears to correspond to the average "kulak" family. Based on the figures of Davies, Wheatcroft and Lewin, kulak children must have comprised between 1.52 and 2.3 million (38% of 4-6 million individuals).

**Table 6**: Estimation of proportion of kulak and age distribution for the whole dekulakisation process

| | Total number of Kulak's | Children (approximately 38%) |
|---|---|---|
| According to Lewin (before deportation) | 5 – 6 million | 1.9 – 2.3 million |
| According to Davies and Wheatcroft | 5.1 – 5.8 million | 2 – 2.3 million |

(Sources: Lewin, 1985, p. 129; Davies and Wheatcroft, 1994, p. 68)

Again it is important to recall that the first category kulaks suffered more, which may have had implications for their children. Yet it is also worth remembering that children of both first and second category kulaks were treated more or less similarly by the Soviet authorities – that is they were deported to the special settlements. The question to be pursued is therefore, how many kulak children were deported.

### *4.1.3 Proportion of Kulak children in deportation*

When the resolution "On the Measures for the Liquidation of Kulak Households in Districts of Comprehensive Collectivisation" was adopted by the Politburo, estimates for families to be deported to the sparsely populated areas of the Soviet Union were given. It was established that 70,000 families were to be deported to the Northern Regions of Russia – that is near Arkhangelsk – 50,000 to Siberia, 20-25,000 to Ural and 20-25,000 to Kazakhstan. If we accept that an average kulak family comprised 4 – 5 individuals, the Politburo, in other words, ordered the deportation of between 736,000 and 782,000 individuals (adults as well as children).[17] Given that Davies and Wheatcroft above argued that 2.1 million were deported as either first or second category kulaks from 1930-32/33, it implies that roughly 1.618,000 must have been replaced after January 1930.[18]

[17] V.P. Danilov et al, *Трагедия Советской Деревни., том 2*, Moskva 2000, p. 127.
[18] Davies and Wheatcroft, 1994, p. 68.

In an OGPU report from 28 March 1930, elaborating on the situation in the area of Arkhangelsk, we are told that 169,901 individual deportees arrived (that is 53% of the estimates from 30 January), of which 54,447 were men, 51,967 women and 63,487 children. Men deported as kulaks, in other words, represented 32.1% of the deportees, women 30.5% and children 37.4%.[19] Lynne Viola asserts that by 20 May 1930 this had risen to approximately 72,000 men, 70,000 women and 88,000 children – a total of 230,000 individuals or 46,500 deported families lived in Northern Russia by mid 1930.[20] It is important to underline that the "kulaks" and their families also were deported to Western Siberia, the Urals and Kazakhstan, and hence Viola's figures only give us an impression of the proportion of children. It is relevant to note that the chairman of the children commission of the All-Soviet Central Executive Committee (DTK VTsIK), Savchenko on 9 July 1930 asserted that 56,500 of the deportees living in the Urals were children younger than 16 years.[21] Savchenko gives no precise information about the total number of deportees in the Urals, and it is therefore difficult to compare it with Viola's age distribution.

Sergei Krasilnikov asserts that by December 1932 229,078 individuals had been deported to the system of special settlement of Western Siberia. He distinguishes between the northern and the southern region; the northern region comprised the area surrounding the village of Narym, and was located approximately 500 kilometres north of the city of Tomsk. The southern regions were the areas surrounding Tomsk, Barnaul, Kuznetsk and other places. The largest proportion of settlers, that is 142,477 or 62.2%, lived in the northern areas. The remaining 86,601 or 37.8% were settled in the southern areas. Children younger than 12 years comprised 78,067 of the total number of settlers (34.1%) and adolescents from 12 to 16 years 24,672 (10.7%). It is noteworthy that there was a regional difference, meaning that the number of children in the northern region was comparatively larger than that of the southern. In the northern region children younger than 12 years comprised 51,780 of the 142,477 special settlers (36.3%), whereas the share for the same group in the southern regions was 26,287 of the 86,601 settlers (30.4%). For adolescents between 12 and 16 years the distribution for the northern region was 16,626 (11.7%) and for the southern 8,046 (9.3%). The regional differences become clearer, when we include the number of men and women older than 16 years. For the West Siberian region as a whole men older than 16 years comprised 63,277 (27.6%) and women 63,062 (27.5%). For the northern region it was respectively 34,915 (24.5%) and 39,156

[19] Danilov, 2000, p. 345.
[20] Lynne Viola, "'Tear the Evil From the Roots: The Children of the Spetspereselentsy of the North," Natalia Baschmakoff and Paul Fryer (eds.), "Modernisation of the Russian Provinces", special edition of *Studia Slavica Finlandensia*, volume XVII, Helsinki, 2000 p. 36.
[21] S.S. Vilenskii et al., *Дети ГУЛАГа 1918-1956*, Moskva 2002, p. 86.

(27.5%), whereas in the southern part it was 28,362 (32.8%) and 23,906 (27.6%). Children younger than 12 years comprised by far the largest group of the total number of special settlers, however, the number of men was comparatively larger in the southern region.[22]

The above estimations show that the deportation of kulaks also meant the forceful removal of a substantial number of children. A considerable number remained with their deported parents or in the orphanages of the special settlement as late as 1932. There were also more children removed than men. And, the composition of a family in deportation was akin to that of families in rural areas in general (children comprised approximately 40%). In Krasilnikov's work we can furthermore detect an interesting aspect, namely that the number of children was larger in the northern region of Western Siberia. Although we should be careful about this assessment, since children were still a significantly large group of deportees in the southern region, it indicates that more babies were born in the settlements of the northern regions – at the very least the number of women and children younger than 12 years was remarkably larger here than in the southern region. It also indicates that more men were settled in this region, which could imply that the first category "kulaks" primarily lived in this part of the oblast – the most dangerous "kulaks" were settled closer to the political centre, the city of Tomsk, in order for the authorities to keep a closer eye on them.

The initial order of OGPU from January 1930 issued that between 736,000 and 782,000 had to be deported, yet the above numbers from Northern Russia and Western Siberia only amount to approximately 450,000. This number is evidently much smaller than the initial quota, which may be because the remaining deportees were sent to either the Urals or Kazakhstan. Yet this cannot explain everything, as the aforementioned total figure for deported kulak families from 1930-32/33 according to Davies and Wheatcroft was 2.1 million. The above numbers are incomplete, and primarily serve the purpose to provide us an idea of the proportion between adults and children in the special settlements. Also it is important to underline that the demographic situation in the system of the special settlements was never static. This makes it difficult to present a precise picture of the situation. There was, in other words, an enormous movement of people to and from the settlements, and the numbers vary from year to year.

The death frequency, as will be revealed, was particularly high by the beginning of the 1930s, and the proportion of deportees would drop as a consequence. It is also important to remember that some special settlers were returned to their places of origin as "wrongly deported". Children in particular were sent back in the initial phase, but also third category kulaks. In 1934/35 a substantial

[22] Sergei Krasilnikov, *Серп и молох. Крестьянская ссылка в западной Сибири в 1930-е*, Moscow 2003, p. 171.

number of those previously dekulakised were released as part of so-call amnesty campaigns.[23] Some deported kulak settlers escaped from the special settlements throughout this period, of which some were recaptured and returned to the system. Furthermore the number of special settlers was affected by newborns and newly deported arriving throughout the 1930s. The motion of people can be exemplified by the development of Narym krai. During the spring and summer of 1930 28,400 were deported to the region, but there is no information about the total numbers living in the settlements at that point. However, by 1 June 1931 the total figure for the special kulak settlers grew to 50,687. The primary explanation to this rise was the launching of the second wave of dekulakisation by autumn 1930. By September 1931 more than 215,261 lived in the settlements of Narym, but this number dropped to 182,298 in June 1932. The situation was, in other words, intense, as approximately 200,000 people would be sent to Narym from 1930 to September 1931, and another 30,000 would leave again during the short period from September 1931 to June 1932. It is difficult to give a precise picture of the movement from September 1931 to June 1932, as the numbers are incomplete; however, Krasilnikov asserts that the balance between "incoming" and "leaving" in this period would be approximately minus 45,000.[24]

The statistic for Narym krai additionally shows from June 1931 to May 1932, a total of 3,841 newborns; 7,721 returned fugitives; 25,213 deaths; 27,178 fugitives and 10,669 returned from the special settlements to their place of origin. The figures for fugitives are unclear, as they do not specify whether the recaptured fugitives are included in this number.[25]

**Table 7**: Development in Naryms Krai from June 1931 to May 1932

| | |
|---|---|
| Newborns | 3,841 |
| Returned Fugitives | 7,721 |
| Deaths | 25,213 |
| Fugitives | 27,178 |
| Returned from the special settlements to place of origin | 10,669 |

(source: Krasilnikov, 2003, p. 161)

[23] David Shearer, "Social Disorder, Mass Repression and the NKVD during the 1930s" pp. 85-117 in Barry McLoughlin and Kevin McDermett, *Stalin's Terror. High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*, London 2003, p. 106.
[24] Krasilnikov, 2003, pp. 160-161.
[25] Ibid. p. 161.

This movement of people is important, as it evidently had an immense impact on the situation of deported children – either because they experienced the inhuman transportation, were returned to their relatives, died from exhaustion, lost members of their families due to the high death frequency or were raised as newborns in the settlements. The development is furthermore important, as it implies that the proportion between adults and children in the special settlements could vary, depending on which period we analyse. It would therefore also be worth examining the situation of children in the special settlements on a longer term.

*4.1.4 The situation of deported children by 1941*

Vladimir Zemskov has analysed the situation in the system of special kulak settlements by October 1941 – that is 11½ year after dekulakisation was launched. He works on the development of 35 different republics, autonomous republics, oblasts and krai, and consequently provides a complete picture of the age distribution – which is worth examining for understanding the situation of deported children by 1941. The region with the highest number of deported "kulaks" was Kazakhstan, with 175,788 so-call special settlers (adults as well as children). Children younger than 16 years comprised 70,605 (40%). A similar distribution may be detected in Novosibirsk oblast, which had the second largest contingent of deportees, where children younger than 16 years comprised 76,751 of the total 170,645 (44.9%). In Sverdlovsk oblast children and adolescents younger than 16 years comprised 35,246 of the total 86,640 settlers (40.6%). In Arkhangelsk children younger than 16 years comprised 11,397 of the total 33,660 (33.8%).[26]

Zemskov's age distribution for of all 35 republics, autonomous republics, oblasts and krai implies that children younger than 16 years comprised 378,877 of the total 936,547 deported kulaks (40.4%).We can conclude that even if the number of deported kulak families dropped throughout the 1930s (for example in Arkhangelsk it is significant that the total number of individuals dropped from 230,000 to 33,660 from 1930 to 1941), the number of children in deportation remained very high. It is also noteworthy that the number of children was even higher than the group traditionally considered to be the primary enemy of the Soviet state and thus the main target of the repressive dekulakisation policy – namely adult men or the head of the household. This remains a fact even in 1941, when men, or the designated "kulaks", comprised 272,473 of the total 936,547 deportees (29.1%), which is significantly lower than the number of children.[27] This is, of course, due to the fact that a family comprised 1 adult father and approximately 2-3 children – there were by nature

[26] V.N. Zemskov, *Спецпереселенцы в СССР 1930-1960*, Moscow 2005, pp. 98-99 (Table 19).
[27] Ibid.

more children than men. Also it must be recalled that NKVD issued Order No 00447 in 1937, which must have had a devastating impact on some of the adult men in deportation.

What the table also reveals is that despite the ending of the dekulakisation in 1932, the system of special settlements remained in existence until the 1940s, and was widespread in various parts of the Soviet Union. The settlements were not just concentrated in the initial four regions of Northern Russia, Siberia, Urals and Kazakhstan. Other regions, such as the Leningrad Oblast and Ukraine, also had settlements for deported "kulaks". It is also important that almost one million people still lived in the settlements in 1941, and that children younger than 16 years remained to comprise 40% in the system of settlements.

**Table 8**: Age distribution among deported kulaks in October 1941 and geographical distribution of the settlements

| | Oblast, Krai or republic | Total number of deportees | Men | Women | Adolescents 14-16 years | Children younger than 14 years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Kazakhstan SSR | 175,788 | 51,472 | 53,711 | 16,835 | 53,770 |
| 2 | Novosibirsk oblast | 170,645 | 45,071 | 48,823 | 13,592 | 63,159 |
| 3 | Sverdlovsk oblast | 86,640 | 24,517 | 26,877 | 6,283 | 28,963 |
| 4 | Molotovsk oblast | 71,793 | 21,350 | 23,885 | 4,215 | 22,343 |
| 5 | Krasnoyarsk oblast | 48,308 | 14,135 | 15,372 | 4,185 | 14,616 |
| 6 | Chelyabinsk oblast | 45,475 | 13,055 | 13,045 | 4,470 | 14,905 |
| 7 | Ordzhonikidzev oblast | 43,360 | 11,844 | 12,415 | 3,562 | 15,539 |
| 8 | Omsk oblast | 35,593 | 9,055 | 10,870 | 2,400 | 13,268 |
| 9 | Arkhangelsk oblast | 33,660 | 11,556 | 10,707 | 2,116 | 9,281 |
| 10 | Karel-Finish SSR | 29,619 | 10,137 | 9,298 | 2,774 | 7,410 |
| 11 | Irkustsk oblast | 28,165 | 8,237 | 9,085 | 1,837 | 9,006 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Khabarovsk krai | 25,376 | 7,976 | 7,861 | 1,429 | 8,110 |
| 13 | Chitinsk oblast | 23,152 | 7,214 | 6,977 | 1,378 | 7,585 |
| 14 | Komi ASSR | 17,809 | 5,493 | 5,498 | 1,362 | 5,456 |
| 15 | Murmansk oblast | 14,483 | 4,881 | 5,220 | 866 | 3,515 |
| 16 | Uzbek SSR | 11,784 | 3,840 | 3,086 | 571 | 4,287 |
| 17 | Bashkirsk ASSR | 11,144 | 3,112 | 2,819 | 746 | 4,467 |
| 18 | Vologodsk oblast | 9,880 | 3,331 | 3,136 | 823 | 2,590 |
| 19 | Kirovsk oblast | 8,514 | 2,795 | 2,497 | 493 | 2,729 |
| 20 | Tadzhiksk SSR | 8,423 | 2,567 | 2,842 | 779 | 2,235 |
| 21 | Kirgizsk SSR | 7,355 | 1,968 | 2,022 | 687 | 2,678 |
| 22 | Ukrainsk SSR | 6,490 | 1,404 | 1,801 | 379 | 2,906 |
| 23 | Yarkutsk SSR | 3,461 | 1,386 | 1,007 | 173 | 895 |
| 24 | Leningradsk oblast | 2,973 | 983 | 1,100 | 197 | 693 |
| 25 | Altai krai | 2,815 | 890 | 1,030 | 235 | 660 |
| 26 | Kuibyshev oblast. | 2,709 | 751 | 752 | 204 | 1,002 |
| 27 | Stalingrad oblast | 2,419 | 719 | 807 | 165 | 728 |
| 28 | Chkalovsk oblast | 2,257 | 698 | 721 | 162 | 676 |
| 29 | Buriat-Mongolian ASSR | 1,663 | 554 | 500 | 92 | 517 |
| 30 | Vorkutlag NKVD | 1,607 | 457 | 512 | 55 | 583 |
| 31 | Kalmytskaya ASSR | 1,005 | 258 | 353 | 75 | 319 |
| 32 | Primorskii krai | 1,002 | 310 | 267 | 56 | 369 |
| 33 | Kombinat "Sevnikel'" NKVD | 876 | 260 | 240 | 76 | 300 |
| 34 | Severo-Ostinskaya ASSR | 158 | 90 | 35 | 10 | 23 |
| 35 | Noril'lag NKVD | 147 | 107 | 26 | 1 | 13 |
| | Total | 936,547 | 272,473 | 285,197 | 73,280 | 305,597 |

(Source: Zemskov, 2005, pp. 98-99)

## 4.2 Life in the special settlements

### *4.2.1 Expropriation of kulak households and deportation*

Having established the proportion of kulak children living in deportation from 1930 to 1941, we will move on to discuss their living conditions. The liquidation of all kulak households automatically implied the banishment of whole families from their villages of origin. Various personal accounts, from activists and others assisting the Soviet regime, explain how the expropriation of the household was carried out. These accounts reveal an inhumanity, which shocked even people in charge of the operations. Y. Maslevits, who was employed in the land division of a local Ukrainian administration by 1929/1930, was sent to the village of Birky in the Poltava region in order to assist the initial phase of dekulakisation. Regarding one specific kulak family Maslevits described: "Thus by the end of December all those destined to be dekulakised were driven out of the homes with the exception of Roman Yablonowsky who had six small children."[28] Later we are told that Roman Yablonowsky's family was: "[...] dispossessed and expelled, from their homes. The mother had a baby on her arm and two children, a little bigger, were holding on to her dress. The father led two children by the hand, and the eldest girl, behind, carried a bundle of clothing".[29] This family was like so many other dekulakised families in the village removed to temporary and improvised relocation facilities, such as huts, sheds, barns and confiscated church facilities, awaiting their future fate. Later these families were expelled by armed bands, the OGPU and the local *militsia*: "[...]from their improvised dwelling and [taken] to a gathering point. Small children and old people, unable to walk, were put on wagons. Then a column was formed which moved sadly out of Birky [...]".[30] A former Komsomol member Galina Zatmilova remembers that "[...] I saw dekulakisation and collectivisation with my own eye. It left a terrible impression [...] Those crowds of people driven out of their homes, the wild howling of the women, and the wailing of the children, were so awful that I did not recover for long after."[31] The Soviet state turned the worst case scenario into a reality by insisting on a merciless handling of the policy of dekulakisation. Entire families were expelled from their homes, dehumanised and degradated by the regime, the local authorities and their former neighbours. Moshe Lewin has in his classical work on the first winter of collectivisation argued that the central

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[28] Y. Maslevits, "Collectivisation and "kurkul" liquidation" pp. 187-191, in S.O. Pidhainy et al (eds.), *The Black Deads of the Kremlin. A White Book, Vol. 7. Book of Testimonies*, Toronto 1953 p. 188.
[29] Ibid., pp. 189-190.
[30] Ibid., p. 190.
[31] Galina Zatmilov "A Part of History" pp. 171-178 in Simeon Vilensky (ed.) *Till My Tale is Told. Women's Memoirs of the GULAG*, Indiana 1999 p. 173.

government did everything in its power to turn the dekulakisation campaign into a predatory expedition.[32]

The expropriation of the kulak households was only the first step in a long trajectory to an uncertain future. The second step would be deportation of the first and second category kulaks and their families, which was accompanied by enormous human privation – including an immense neglect of children. This started as soon as the families were removed from their homes and deported into the wilderness. The "not harsh" treatment, as the OGPU termed these transportations, was described in a complaint from a deported kulak to the political Red Cross during 1930. The letter was forwarded to the OGPU on 8 August 1930, and detailed a specific trip in a cargo train from Sevastopol in Ukraine via Moscow and Sverdlovsk in the Urals to Nadezhdinsk. The trip was undertaken from 26 March to 4 April 1930, and the complaint read:

> They loaded only part of the luggage; the rest was left behind in Sevastopol or lost. There were forty to forty-two people in each car. [We] were let to go to the toilet no more than four or five times, irregularly and without regards to sex. At other times, people had to use buckets. They gave free bread in Sevastopol upon departure. Later it was possible to buy some more at the stations. As a rule, drinking water was scarce. We often spent a whole day without water. Children suffered from thirst the most. We received hot food three times in ten days, twice at night and once during the day, when they filmed us.
>
> In Nadezhdinsk the receiving officers were particularly rude. The air was filled with profanity; they pushed and hit people, men and women alike. This was in sharp contrast with the polite behaviour in Massandra and during our train journey to Nadezhdinsk.
>
> We were then put on a narrow-gauge train, from Nadezhdinsk to Sosva. Two cars, loaded mostly with flour, as well as fats, dry fruit, etc., were not reloaded onto the narrow-gauge train. It is unclear who disposed of them or how they did it. The cargo consisted of the confiscated property of the settlers. We travelled thirty-two kilometres on a narrow-gauge track to Pospelkovo, where we immediately stepped off into the snow but were forbidden to enter the station to warm up. People spent three days and nights in the snow, in the -12° C cold, including children, many of whom

[32] Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power. A Study of Collectivization. The social, political and ideological problems of a society in the throes of a great transformation*, London 1968 p. 488.

were barefoot. Children formed at least 40 percent of the entire mass of people. For three days officials did not show up, except for one warden. We received neither hot water nor bread for three days.

It took three days to transport the luggage to the villages, and only the old women were allowed to ride. Often children under seven walked in the snow up to their knees and in the -15° C cold through the night. [...]

(Source: Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the GULAG. From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, Yale University 2004, pp. 14-15. My underlining MK)

The striking thing about this complaint, which also reveals significant elements about the nature of the deportation, is that the "not harsh" conditions described in the secret report of the OGPU from February 1930 did not correspond to the reality under which these transportations was taken: everything was lacking, including heat, hot water, food and basic sanitary requirements. Only once was hot food served during the day, and this was because of the recording of a propaganda film supporting the official view of the "not harsh" nature of these transportations.

It might be argued that Maslevits' account of the expropriation of kulak households and this written complaint about the circumstances during the deportation only represents specific incidents, and thus that they are not representative of the nature of these deportations. Other sources, such as German eyewitness accounts, however, suggest that the high mortality, hunger and disease – especially among children – generally were significant on these trips.[33] Lynne Viola has established that the nature of the transports was akin to that described in the above letter. The deportees usually arrived in numbered train wagons at a regional centre – often one of the larger towns, such as Arkhangelsk in Northern Russia, or Tomsk in Western Siberia. The first deportees arrived in February 1930, when the temperatures were below zero. What was characteristic about this, according to Viola, was that there was no water on the trips, and rarely any hot water as the OGPU had promised. Food was meagre (in other words, the deportees starved), and money was taken away from the deportees. Finally, a significant number of the deportees became ill during the trip and the mortality rate was very high. Aside from the designated leader of the deportees (*starost*) and his assistant, who were allowed to get off once a day in order to acquire food for themselves and the others, all deportees were forbidden to leave the train. All this had a devastating impact on the well-being of the transported: From one specific trip, of 189 train wagons, we learn that 390 individuals (of which there were 173 children, 168 women and 49 men),

[33] Stephan Merl *Bauern unter Stalin. Die Formierung des sowjetischen Kolchossystems, 1930-1941*, Berlin 1990 pp. 78-79.

were removed from the trains because of illness. Furthermore, 58 people died (47 children, 10 men and 1 woman).[34] Although this is based on incomplete numbers, the impression is that the trips were extremely hard.

That the conditions on the trains were inhuman, and often caused the death of the deportees, became apparent even to the OGPU leadership in 1932-33. In a report from the head of the GULAG, M.D. Berman, to Yagoda on 8 May 1933 (concerning the trainloads of deported kulak families leaving Northern Caucasus) it was noted: "Every train [...] has remarkably high mortality and disease rates, mostly from typhoid fever and acute stomach diseases". Concerning the death rate of deportees going to Siberia, it was established that "...many died from exhaustion [on the trips]."[35] This implies that the human privation, as described in the aforementioned complaint of 1930, was not exceptional. Berman's reflection in fact suggests that the horrible conditions on the trains were widespread and continued to be so throughout the whole dekulakisation process. Also it implies that even hardliners in the Soviet regime at some point were concerned about this fact. This point can also be justified from the directions from Yagoda to Evdokimov, added in the margins to Berman's reports, which asserts: "I will be forced to stop receiving [trainloads] if you do not urgently improve the situation with transportation".[36] It should be noted that such concern was not necessarily a sign of humanitarianism, as both Berman and Yagoda had other practical matters to think about – such as securing a workforce to the forced labour economy of the special settlements. It was a demanding task for the OGPU to rectify the situation of the transports, and they were not interested in using unnecessary resources on securing food supplies to the exhausted and sick deportees. Hence it could also be seen as a way to disclaim any responsibility of the situation, and instead put pressure on other people and institutions and expect them to solve it.

Viola places the blame for these conditions with the OGPU; however, rather than placing the liability at the top of the command structure, that is on Yagoda, Berman and others, she explains it as a result of the actions of those local GPU officials who were in charge of the transports. It was termed as "criminal neglect", since these *apparatchiki* often sent deportees to their destination poorly dressed and completely unprepared.[37] The question is to what extent the leadership of the OGPU can be acquitted from this neglect of human lives – was this vast degrading treatment of

[34] Lynne Viola "'Tear the Evil from the Roots: The Children of the Spetsperesenlentsy of the North" in Natalia Baschmakoff and Paul Fryer (eds.) "Modernisation of the Russian Provinces" (special edition of *Studia Slacvica Finlandesia*, Volume XVII) Helsinki 2000 p 39.
[35] Khlevniuk, 2004, p. 69.
[36] Ibid., p. 69.
[37] Ibid., p. 39.

designated kulaks and their families only caused by disobedient low-level officials? It is always easier to place the responsibility of those being placed on the floor – that is of those who directly carried out the issued order. It also is more convenient to ascribe the catastrophe to an individual "criminal neglect", rather than the system in general. It is evident that the "criminal neglect" of individual GPU officers reflects the nature of Soviet society during this specific period. The Politburo, which authorised the dekulakisation, bore the main responsibility for the policy and the manner in which it was implemented. Of course, OGPU officers could have allowed children warmer clothes, to have supplied them with water, food, blankets and medicine, and some did. On the micro-level, that is at each cargo train, each temporary reloading location, and each individual construction site of special settlements, things could have been very different, provided there had been more resources and time.

At the same time it is evident that such dehumanisation could not have occurred without some sort of approval or, at least, acceptance from the central leadership of Moscow. The structure and choices of the Soviet leadership accumulated the development and made it possible to actually deport and exile innocent groups, such as kulak children, and dehumanise them completely. The action and neglect of individuals was an abnormal situation, caused by the political development of the Soviet Union during the 1930s.[38] The consequences for the OGPU officials of mistreating the deportees, including children, were minimal. Hence, the nature of the deportation, and by that the responsibility of the massive neglect was a correlation of individual action and institutional policy.

### *4.2.2 The placement of deported kulaks*

The deported kulaks and their families were placed in some of the most deserted and isolated parts of the Soviet Union, which made it difficult to get there.[39] The settlers, as the deportees were termed, had their official label changed throughout the 1930s: from 1929 until 1934 they were "spetspereselentsy"(special settlers), which changed to "trudposelentsy" (working settlers) from 1934 until 1944, when it was changed back to "spetspereselentsy", and in 1949 it was changed to "spetsposelentsy".[40] It is worth mentioning that these stigmas were synonymous with each other. It is also necessary to note that the nature of the settlers changed from the beginning of the 1930s to the mid 1940s. Initially the deportees were mainly social outcasts, but by the autumn of 1935, when Finns living in the Soviet Union were displaced from Leningrad Oblast, more and more ethnical and

[38] Stephen Wheatcroft, "The Scale and Nature of German of Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930-1945" pp. 1319-1353 in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 8, 1996, p. 1335.
[39] Vladimir Zemskov, *Спецпереселенцы в СССР 1930-1960*, Moscow 2005, p. 4.
[40] Ibid, 2005, p. 18.

national groups were subject to this discrimination. This escalated during the Second World War when the Volga Germans were banished from their home region in 1941, and later in 1944 when the Crimea Tartars and other national groups from the Caucasus became victims of this repression.[41] Since we are analysing the fate of kulak children in the present thesis, we shall only address the development of the social deportees, although this should not be read as an argument of differentiation.

The special settlement administration – the "*komendatura*" – was chaired by a commandant who was appointed by the administrative leadership of the *krai* with consent of the *raiispolkom* (the executive committee of the *raion*) and the OGPU. The commandant subsequently reported to the local administrative leadership of the region, at *raion* as well as *krai* level, and to the OGPU. On 2 August 1930 it was specified that the commandant of the *komendatura* possessed the same legal rights as the executive committee of the *raion*.[42] The commandant was furthermore assisted in carrying out his work by a police officer for every 50 families.[43] In August 1930 it was clarified that the main purpose of the *komendatura* was to administrate the financial, economic, social and cultural construction of the settlements.[44] This included the registration of births, deaths and marriages of all settlers, which had to be reported to the *komendatura* within a specific period of time depending on how far they lived from the office building. Those living more than 20 kilometres away were given 45 days to report births and 30 days to report deaths, whereas those who lived closer had 15 days and 3 days respectively.[45] It is important to specify that there was not just one commandant and one *komendatura*, but rather a series of commandants and *komendatury*, acting as administrators over extensive settlements and settlers. Within Narym krai, located approximately 500 kilometres north of the city of Tomsk, for example, there were seven *komendatury*: Parabel, Vasyugan, Kusov, Tegul'det, Kolpashev, Parbig, and Aleksandrov.[46]

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[41] Ibid, pp. 76-78, p. 93ff.
[42] Sergei Krasilnikov, *Серп и молох. Крестьянская ссылка в западной Сибири в 1930-е годы*, Moscow 2003, p. 147.
[43] Lynne Viola, "The Other Archipelago: Kulak Deportations to the North in 1930" pp. 730-755in *Slavic Review*, 60/4, Winter 2001, p. 738.
[44] S.A. Krasilnikov et al., *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири 1930-Весна 1931*, Novosibirsk 1992, p. 198.
[45] V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири Весна 1931-начало 1933*, Novosibirsk 1993, p. 130.
[46] Krasilnikov, 2003, pp. 216-238. In the appendix of V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири 1933-1938*, Novosibirsk 1994, we find a map of these different komendatury.

*4.2.3 From temporary to permanent instalment*

Vladimir Zemskov asserts that "the terms "deportation" and "special settlements" are not synonymous"[47], implying that the nature of these terminologies varies significantly. Even if the living conditions during the deportation were extraordinarily bad and abnormal, everyday life in the special settlements may have been stabilised and even normalised at some point. The deported "kulaks" and their families were expected to construct a new way of life in deportation. Officially, this was termed as a re-education, that is a way of socially transforming the kulaks into useful citizens of the Soviet state. In a propagandistic analysis of the dekulakisation process, it was established: "The basic mass of kulaks was moved to sparse regions of the Western Krai of Siberia, Kazakhstan and the Urals. They all received accommodation and work. Some were occupied in industries, others in agriculture. The Soviet government supported these former kulaks by giving them credits in order for them to build houses, to help them procure horses and other necessary equipment [...] Agronomist, doctors and teachers were sent to the settlements of the former kulaks".[48] From this point of view there was nothing wrong with life in the special settlements, even if the initial phase had been harsh: all the Soviet government did was to assist their enemies in a process of transforming them into better people. Hence the modernisation of the Soviet Union and colonisation of Siberia, which involved a massive replacement of human beings to the wilderness of the country, was considered to be a scientific assignment: human behaviour could, like a machine, be changed if moderated according to the plan. This led leading Stalinists to believe that people were cogs in the machinery, which became particularly obvious in the use of the Russian term "*Винтики*" (Vintiki) when characterising Soviet citizens.

It is apparent that the Soviet regime believed that human beings, through the right re-education and upbringing, could be "nationalised" and consequently become an asset of the state. Human beings were, from the perspective of the Soviet government, not subjects but objects without feelings and emotional relations to other human beings. The consequences of such notions were described in a letter of a deported "kulak" living in Kotlas addressed to Mikhail I. Kalinin also in 1930:

> [...] In every barrack [of the special kulak settlement] more than two hundred souls live. It is terribly crowded [...] In the daytime it is packed in the space

[47] Zemskov, 2005, p. 3.

[48] A.P. Finarov, "К вопросу о ликвидации кулачества как класса и судьбе бывших кулаков в СССР" in *История Советского крестьянства и колхозного строительства в СССР* Moscow 1968, pp. 276-277.

between the plank beds, and at night people lay on the plank beds close to each other packed like sardines. Many can't find a place on the plank beds, and they sit on the earth floor. Three iron stoves can't heat these barracks as they ought to, even more so because there is a great shortage of firewood. People cover themselves in clothes, sand falls from the roof, there is a lack of bed linen and warm clothing, there is nothing to wash clothes in; People are eaten up by parasites. The food is bad, the hard oat biscuits are coming to an end, and in many cases the bread is not sufficient. People are cooking outside in the frost and windy weather. During the day, when the sun is warm and begins to thaw the ground around the camp, a smell rises from the decaying waste. The only well can't supply the whole camp with water; for this is used a brook in which the water is sometimes so dirty that tea made on it tastes of soap and dirty laundering. Several people are buried each day at the cemetery. The people, who are not used to the climate, some of them very poorly dressed, often catch cold and become ill. Infection with contagious diseases – typhoid fever, diphtheria – have already broken out, there have already been cases of fatalities due to the latter. This is all threatening to become an epidemic towards spring. But it is alright for now [...] Children rub shoulders to shoulders around the stoves, while they try to get as close as possible, pushing each other and getting burned by the hot iron. The whole barrack is full of the screams and cries of children. It might very well be they were kulaks, even if many of them had a position lower than the middle peasants (*seredniak*). It might very well be they are harmful elements, even if many of them arrived only because of the evil tongues of their neighbours. They are, nonetheless, human beings and not cattle, and their living conditions are even worse than those of a decent peasant's cattle. One should not pursue these people to this place of certain death. It would be better to exterminate them immediately. The state would have fewer worries, and these thousands of unhappy people, whose fate is determined without their participation, would have the satisfaction of a quick death without starvation and illness. It may be that the fathers, mothers and grandparents are guilty, but for what reason do the children suffer!? Many teenagers were removed from schools, where they

> studied and were brought up. And they live here without anything to do and without teaching [...] All in all; to leave these people for a long time under these conditions is monstrous (зверство) [...] All these people are already uneducated and backward, but here they completely turn into wild beasts. A man cannot remain a man under these circumstances [...]
> (source: S.S. Vilenskii et.al, *Дети ГУЛАГа 1918-1956*, Moscow 2002, pp. 80-81)

This picture is supported by several medical reports issued by Western Siberian authorities in the spring of 1930. A report from Omsk dated 20 April 1930 and written by the leading assistant doctor of a local settlement states: "I inform you as leader that at the present time children of all ages are in the worst state. Regarding nourishments, let us take those from two months to 7 years: there is no milk, no meat or sugar, no cod-liver oil and no oatmeal. Bread is insufficient [...] I previously wrote for you to send at least some sugar or some oatmeal, some of the infants don't suckle or there is no milk left in their mother's breasts, so the child is left with nothing but water. Stomach and intestinal diseases are furiously ravaging the children, due to their starving mothers".[49] A similar picture emerges from a report issued by a medical assistance point in the Ust'-Iagiliaskii region on 31 May 1930: "[...] recently the disease level has increased, the diseases are most of all progressive, people of all ages, adults and children, are suffering from swollen bodies, gory diarrhoea, penetrated by pain in the stomach, catarrh, common diarrhoea, constipation, swollen stomachs and inflamed abdomens, children are swollen and dying from malnutrition".[50] Finally, a secret medical report from Tomsk, issued on 18 December 1930 establishes: "In the barracks of the camp 'Tomsk-1' 14 children died during the night of 18/XII [...] In the camp of 'Tomsk-1' there is only one doctor, covering several positions at once, for almost 6000 special settlers [*spetspereselentsy*], living extraordinarily packed and unsanitary conditions. Since the mothers are hiding their ill children, it is necessary to conduct a medical inspection of the barracks everyday, which one doctor, not even with a complete workload, is not capable of doing."[51]

The question is whether these conditions changed during the 1930s, and if life varied significantly from the deportations to permanent placement in the special settlements. It is evident, from Viola's analysis of the situation of kulak children in the Northern region, that the level of epidemics,

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[49] V.P. Danilov and S.A.Krasilnikov, *Спецпереңцы в Западной Сибири 1930- весна 1931г.*, Novosibirsk 1992, p. 258 and S.S. Vilenskii *et al, Дети ГУЛАГа 1918-1956*, Moscow 2002, p. 89.
[50] Danilov and Krasilnikov, 1992, p. 259 and Vilenskii et. al., 2002, p. 90.
[51] Danilov and Krasilnikov, 1992, p. 267 and Vilenskii et al, 2002, pp. 87-88.

mortality and hunger remained very high especially in the temporary instalments.[52] The situatic was catastrophic by 1930-31, and the death rate very high. The settlements were in a chaoti situation, due to a fundamental lack of basic things, such as housing, hospitals and other medic services, a road system, railroads, and schools. Most of these settlements were placed in remot areas, and isolation made it even more difficult to maintain even the simplest of services. Hence food and medical supplies were immensely difficult to maintain.

In a secret OGPU report about the situation in the 189 settlements of the Northern regions o Russia, it was established on 22 December 1930 that the total number of settlers, including children comprised 103,970. Of these 64,996 lived in barracks, and the remaining 38,974 were settled in temporary huts.[53] From information about the living conditions in the special settlements of Western Siberia, obtained in July 1932, we learn that the average living space per person in the barracks was 2.2 $m^2$. Moreover it was revealed that barracks constructed for one family (that is 4-6 people), accommodated 2-3 families (that is, 12-18 people). Regarding nutrition among the settlers, the daily ration was adjusted as to whether they were "able bodied" or if they belonged to the category of nursing mothers, children and the elderly. The head of the family (provided, of course, he was "able bodied"), received 17 kg of flour, 3-4 kg of oatmeal and 1 kg of sugar for himself and his family. There is no information regarding the interval for the distribution of such rations (whether it was daily, weekly or monthly), however, food was generally described as monotonous, low in calories and lacking in fat. There were no vegetables, meat arrived at the settlements irregularly, and the nutritional level was very poor. This is despite the fact that the supply situation to the Western Siberian settlements was considered to be better in 1932 than it had been in 1931.[54] This says more about the supply situation in 1931 than about that in 1932: famine was, after all, tormenting the country already in the spring of 1932.

Regarding the occupation of the special settlers, we learn that of those deported to Northern Russia in 1930, 23,623 were involved in the construction of the settlements, whereas 6,000 were employed in the local timber industry. Another important task was the construction of 790 kilometres of roads linking the settlements together with each other, the *komendatura* and the local administrative centre of the region. The timber and road work was extremely hard, due to the harsh terrain, and such circumstances – combined with the poor food supply – significantly augmented the death rate. The OGPU accounted for a total lost of 21,214 dead during 1930, that is 20.4% of

[52] Viola, "Tear the evil..." 2000, pp. 42-43, and p. 46.
[53] Danilov, 2000, p. 785.
[54] V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *С. гипереселенцы в Западной Сибири. Весна 1931-Начало 1933г.*, Novosibirsk 1993, pp. 229-230.

the total 103,970 placed in the settlements of Northern Russia.[55] The share of children is not revealed in this statistic; however, in data from Western Siberia, it is possible to conclude that they comprised a significant proportion. The data is incomplete and covers July and August 1932. There is, however, no reason to believe that the situation of children should have worsened from 1930 to July and August 1932. In fact it should be the other way around, if the situation really improved in the settlements of Western Siberia – as suggested in the report from July 1932. The statistic from Western Siberia, at the very least, provides an impression about the distribution of mortality among adults and children.

Children younger than 16 years old comprised 333 of the total 1256 dead in Western Siberia by July 1932, with 274 of the remaining deaths being adults – there is no information about the ages distribution of the remaining 649 deaths. Assuming that the age distribution was not significantly different in this group of deaths, children younger than 16 years old comprised approximately 55% of the total mortality rate. A month later, in August 1932, 860 died in the regions, whereof 328 were below 16 years old, while 331 were above 16 years old – the age of the remaining 201 is not elucidated. Children younger than 16 years old thus comprised 50% of the total deaths.[56] If we accept such distributions, it can also be asserted that of the 21,214 deaths in the settlements of Northern Russian in 1930, children quite possibly comprised approximately 50% – that is approximately 10,000 dead children. Since children comprised 40% of the total number of settlers, that is approximately 41,588 children, it can be established that the infant mortality rate was 24%. The infant mortality rate was consequently slightly higher than the number of deaths for the total number of settlers (adults as well as children).

**Table 9**: the demographic situation of the special settlements of Northern Russia by 1930

| | In numbers | Death rate |
|---|---|---|
| Total Number of settlers | 103,970 | |
| Number of children (that is 40%) | 41,588 | |
| Total of deaths | 21,214 | 20.4% |
| Infant mortality (that is 50%) | 10,000 | 24% |

(source: Danilov, 2000, p. 785)

[55] Danilov, 2000, p. 785.
[56] Danilov and Krasilnikov, 1993, pp. 29-30.

Zemskov elaborates thoroughly upon the demographic development of the settlements and establishes that 381,173 families or 1,803,392 individuals were deported in 1930 and 1931. If the above death rate is correct, that is 20.4% of the total number of settlers died, it would imply that approximately 360,000 people (adults as well as children) died in the settlements in those two years. If this can be accepted it can furthermore be elaborated that approximately 184,000 children died in the first two years of exile. There is no certain indication of this in the work of Zemskov, but what he does assert is that one of the main explanations for the massive drop in the population of the settlers from 1931 to 1932 was death. Zemskov asserts that the explanation of this decrease primarily was due to the working conditions of the settlers. He also calculates that 1,317,022 individuals lived in the settlements by 1932, which implies a drop of approximately 486,000 individuals. If the main reason for this decrease was death, it would support the high number of approximately 360,000 victims during the first years of 1930 and 1931.[57] We should also remember that the reduction from 1931 to 1932 was caused by fewer deportations, when the dekulakisation officially ended in 1932.[58] Lynne Viola, nonetheless, accepts that the death-rate among deported kulaks was very high in 1930-1931, but argues that there appears to have been a slight drop in 1931, although this intensified in 1932/33 because of the famine.[59] This is supported by the data of Zemskov; 1,317,022 individuals were placed in the settlements by 1932, of whom 89,754 died (6.8 %). The death-rate, however, rose significantly in 1933 when 151,601 died out of the total 1,142,082 settlers (13.3%). The main explanation for this rise was starvation and illness caused primarily by the famine. However, in 1934 the death-rate once more dropped, as the dead comprised 40,012 of the total 1,072,546 settlers (3.7%). In 1935 the number of dead comprised 22,173 of the total 973,693 settlers (2.3%), and in 1936 there is a rise in the number of deportees to 1,017,133 individuals. The proportion of dead dropped that year to 19.891 (1.9%).[60]

There is no certain explanation for the increase in the number of deportees in 1936, even if arrests following the commencement of the Great Terror is a possible answer. However, if this was the only reason, it is still difficult to explain the drop to 916,787 settlers in 1937, when political terror was intensified and the new round up of former kulaks and criminal elements followed Order No. 00447. What is noteworthy in 1937 was that the number of dead comprised 17,037 (1.8%), which does not imply a worsening but rather a stabilisation in the death-rate in comparison with the previous years. This continued in 1938 when the dead comprised 16,961 of the total

[57] Zemskov, 2005, pp. 16-21.
[58] R.W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger*, London 2003, p. 47.
[59] Viola, "Tear the evil...", 2000, p. 50.
[60] Zemskov, 2005, pp. 20-21.

877,651 settlers (1.9%); in 1939 the distribution was 16,691 dead of the total 938,522 (1.8%); and finally in 1940 it was 16,401 dead of the total 997,513 deported kulaks and their families (1.6%).[61] Stephen Wheatcroft has established that while the forced labour force rose during the 1930s, implying that the rise must have appeared in another sector of the GULAG system than the special settlements, the living conditions of incarcerated people improved considerably from 1930 to 1937/38 – except for 1932/33, when famine also ravaged the settlements. The indicator of a stabilisation was that the mortality rate dropped.[62] And, a drop from 20.4% in 1930/31 to 1.6 – 1.9% in 1936-1940 should be considered significant.

**Table 10** Death rate in the special settlements from 1932-40 (in thousand)

| | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 | 1938 | 1939 | 1940 | Tota |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 1.317 | 1.142 | 1.072 | 973 | 1.017 | 916 | 877 | 938 | 997 | |
| Deaths | 89 | 151 | 40 | 22 | 19 | 17 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 38 |
| Death in % | 6.8 | 13.3 | 3.7 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.6 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

(Source: Vladimir Zemskov, *Спецпереселенцы в СССР 1930-1960*, Moscow 2005, pp. 21-22 (Table 2))

Another indicator that a stabilisation of the living conditions in the special settlements must have occurred by the mid-1930s can be found in the rise of the birth-rate especially from 1934-1935 onwards. In 1932 18,053 newborn children were reported, and they comprised 1.4% of the total number of settlers. In 1933 the number of newborn was 17,082 (1.5%); and in 1934 it was 14,033 (1.3%). However, in 1935 this rose to 26,122 (2.6%), which in 1936 again increased to 27,617 (2.7%). In 1937 the number of newborn rose additionally with a drop in the total number of settlers, implying that the proportion of babies grew remarkably. Newborn babies comprised 29,036 of the total settlers (3.2%), and this development is difficult to explain as anything other than an indicator of a stabilisation of the living conditions of the deported families living in the special settlements. 1937 was the year of the intensification of the Great Terror, however, this did not prevent the settlers from conceiving children – to the contrary. A natural explanation to this is, of course, that a pregnancy last 9 months and babies born in 1936-37 may very well have been conceived before the terror reached its peak – and maybe even before their parents were deported.

[61] Ibid., pp. 20-21.
[62] Wheatcroft, 1996, p. 1331.

Thus it may also be discussed whether the rise in the birth-rate alone can be explained as a sign of stabilisation. The development nevertheless continued in 1938, when the birth-rate rose to 31,867 newborns (3.6%); in 1939 this was 33,716 (3.6%); and finally in 1940 32,732 (3.3%). While focussing on the rising birth-rate, indicating that the kulak families were returning to some sort of daily routine even though deported, it is important to mention that the total birth-rate of the 1930s would remain lower than the total death-rate, due to the catastrophic impact on the development of the first 4 years of dekulakisation. The total number of deaths from 1932-40 was 389,521, while the newborn comprised 230,258.

Thus, the crude death rate (CDR) of the special settlements was significantly higher than the crude birth rate (CBR). Adding the numbers of deaths from 1930-31, it can be established that approximately 749,000 people died during the 1930s. The rate of infant mortality is not revealed in this calculation, but they may have comprised approximately 50% of this number during the first couple of years. A stabilisation, and even a lowering of the number of infant deaths, occurred by the mid-1930s. It is remarkable that a high proportion of total deaths appeared in the period when the dekulakisation policy was most intense – that is from 1930 to 1932/33. The impact of this period was so damaging to the "kulaks" that even if the birth-rate overtook the death-rate by 1935-36 it was never able to transform the development into a positive demographic situation. Regardless of the exact numbers of deaths directly caused by dekulakisation, it can be established that while the living conditions assumingly were stabilising by the mid-1930s, the demographic development in this particular sector of society was generally negative. This is supported by the fact that whereas the input in the settlements, that is newborns, newly deported, and returning of fugitives, comprised 2,176,600 from 1932-40, the output, that is deaths, escaping, returning of wrongly deported, and people being moved to other sectors of the GULAG (most notably the concentration camps), comprised 2,563,401. Those dying, escaping and being moved comprised the biggest number of the "outputs". This would support the idea that the negative demographic development of the special settlements was primarily caused by the living conditions in this sector – it was a direct result of the dekulakisation policy. It is crucial to remember that the low number of incomers from 1932-40 can also be explained as an outcome of fewer deportations by the mid-1930s. This gives the demographic drop a different character.[63]

[63] Zemskov, 2005, pp. 20-21.

**Table 11:** Birth rate and demographic development in the special settlements from 1932-40 (in thousands)

| | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 | 1938 | 1939 | 1940 | Tot |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Input | 201 | 398 | 254 | 246 | 164 | 128 | 424 | 220 | 137 | 2,1 |
| Births | 18 | 17 | 14 | 26 | 27 | 29 | 31 | 33 | 32 | 2 |
| Birth in % | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.3 | |
| Output | 376 | 467 | 353 | 202 | 265 | 167 | 363 | 161 | 204 | 2,56 |

(Source: Zemskov, 2005, pp. 21-22 (Table 2))

*4.2.4 Plans and Reality*

Although living conditions stabilised by 1935, the nature of such stabilisation should be discussed more thoroughly. How did the Soviet authorities respond to the demographic situation of the settlements? That the situation of settlements was dramatic became evident for the Soviet authorities at a very early stage. The local health authorities in the Narym region of Tomsk Oblast submitted statistics on the development of diseases for each month in 1932-33. Twelve different types of epidemics are recorded in this period, but three were more significant: typhoid fever, malaria and influenza. Illness was common, but it is also significant that the diseases were caused by natural conditions – even if they were by-product of a political repression. Since the settlements of Western Siberia were located in the Taiga and Tundra, they were affected by the presence of mosquitoes, which intensified the rate of malaria. In the final three months of 1932, 358 people suffered from typhoid fever, 1181 from malaria, and 172 from influenza.[64] The development continued the following years, and grew dramatically in June 1933 when 336 had typhoid fever, 1461 malaria, and 382 influenza.[65] In the months that follow, July to December 1933, the reports are inconsistent, and there is not sufficient data on the level of the epidemics. This could either imply that the authorities had gained control over the epidemics, or that the situation was chaotic. Based on the total numbers of diseases in 1933 – published at the end of that year – it is most likely that the health authorities at some point lost control of the situation in the region.[66]

The Soviet authorities were not indifferent towards this negative development, and discussed it at the highest level. In December 1931 the Politburo was increasingly concerned about the illnesses

[64] GATO, f. r-590, op. 1, d. 30, l. 8.
[65] GATO, f. r-590, op. 1, d. 31, l. 169.
[66] Ibid, ll. 198, 237, 274, 275, 309, 344, 377, 413.

in the special settlements, and ordered the People's Commissariat of Health (NKZdrav) to intensify the medical effort; more doctors, nurses and medical equipment had to be sent to the settlements.[67] On 21 February 1932 the Council of People's Commissariat (SNK) issued an order signed by V. Molotov and P. Kerzhentsev about the poor sanitary situation in the settlements. It established that the ambition was "To assume the necessary acceptance of the decisive measures for improving the health situation in the districts (*raion*) of special settlements, and to minimise the death, of the children [...]". The SNK subsequently elaborated on seven specific areas where all the relevant commissariats (the OGPU, the People's Commissariat of the Timber Industry, the People's Commissariat of Trade, the People's Commissariat of Agriculture and the NKZdrav) were sent to assist in improving the sanitary situation in the special settlements.[68] In relation to children it was specifically emphasised that:

> To accept the necessity to organise in the coming six months supplementary nourishment of the weakest underage children (up to eight years) firstly social nourishment in nurseries, preschool institutions, special children's canteens and by direct hand-outs.
>
> The organisation of extra child nourishment is to be delegated to the consumer's cooperative [*potrebkooperatsiia*] in agreement with the health authorities [...] In order to make the extra child nourishment cheaper, and to delegate the most important necessities for free, it is to be suggested to the OGPU to give the consumer's cooperative subsidies from the sources of the OGPU taken from the wages of the special settlers of 1 million roubles in order to organise this matter.
>
> (Source: V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири. Весна 1931-Начало 1933г.*, Novosibirsk 1993, p. 30)

Whether these initiatives improved the living conditions of children shall be discussed further. We can recall that children younger than 15 years old comprised 526,800 (40% of 1.3 million) of the total settlers in 1932, which suggests that the SNK granted 1.89 roubles per child for this supplementary nourishment. Even if the age limit was 8 years old, implying that the "social nourishment" was aimed at fewer children and thus that the personal contribution was higher, the

[67] Adibekov, G.M. "Спецпереселенцы – жертвы «сплошной коллективизации». Из документов «особой папки» Политбюро ЦК ВКП(б)" in *Исторический архив*, Volume 2, Number 4, 1994, p. 175.
[68] Danilov and Krasilnikov, 1993, p. 29-30.

impression is that the resources set aside for this attempt "...to minimise the death, of the children [...]" was hopelessly inadequate. One might also ask why children from 8 to 15 years old were excluded from this special programme of nourishment: did they not qualify as victims?

The impression that the measures of the Soviet regime were insufficient and contradictory is supported by a report from July 1932 by leading medical officials of the special settlements in the region surrounding Tomsk. This report established that the situation of children as young as five to seven years old was critical. They were described as "apathetic", "old looking", "immobile", "malnourished", and "poorly clothed".[69] This continued to be evident on 14 December 1932, when inspecting officers of the OGPU and the local health organs checked the medical situation of the special settlements in the same region. Initially, it was reported that the annual budget for the improvement of the sanitary situation was the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Social insurance (sotsstrakhovanie) | 307,265.00 roubles |
| Epidemic fund | 13,601.00 roubles |
| Nurseries | 31,000.00 roubles |
| Housing for mother and children | 21,995.00 roubles |
| Investment | 19,560.00 roubles |
| Total | 393,421.00 roubles |

(Source: GATO, f. r-590, op.1, delo 1, l. 12)

It was also asserted by the inspecting team that there was no financial plan for medical staff, emphasising that the ambition of rectifying the sanitary situation was made difficult. Furthermore, it was stressed that there was a significant gap between the resources of the budget and real needs. For example, it was established that the medical treatment in all *komendatury* of Western Siberia required a total of 254,177 roubles – resources which could not be found in the annual budget of 1932. Moreover, it was evident that the resources earmarked for epidemic treatments were much lower than the actual need, since instead of being a total of 13,601 roubles needed it turned out that the authorities actually required 35,516 roubles. Finally there was no information about the financial situation of the nurseries, or the special homes for mothers and children. It is reasonable to argue that these sectors were also neglected financially. Based on the conclusion of this report it was

[69] Ibid., 231-232.

established that there was: 1) an incomplete allocation for medical staff; 2) no estimation for the requirements of 1932; 3) no financial plan for medical workers; 4) no budget for medical workers; 5) an incomplete financial estimation of actual needs.[70] If the central authorities in Moscow had an ambition to rectify the living conditions in deportation, this was impeded by weak financial planning and underfunding.

The problem of finding resources became increasingly apparent in the relation between the authorities and the children. In December 1935 the West Siberian Children's Commission (*Detkomissi po zapsibkrai*) sent a report to the chairman of the West Siberian Executive Committee of Soviets, about the living conditions in the local orphanages administrated by the NKVD. This would primarily be orphanages where kulak children were placed. The report was written three years after the Molotov-commission established that special resources were to be found in order to minimise the rate of child morality among the deported. Living conditions had stabilised in the special settlements as such by 1935/36. Therefore, it could be expected that the living conditions of orphan kulak children improved considerably at this point. However, the report suggests that the situation of kulak children remained extremely problematic. The main issue to be addressed was overcrowding in each orphanage. The number of homeless children (*besprizornye*) rose, and the orphanages of Western Siberia had to take in a large number of children by 1935. There were not enough orphanages to handle this problem. The capacity of the orphanages in Novosibirsk was 200 children, however, by 1 December that year 494 children lived there. A similar picture can be found in Barnaul, where the capacity was 70 children, however, 128 children were homeless. Instead of the facility of 50 children in Stalinsk, 119 lived in the orphanages in this region. In Anzherke there were 64 children instead of the capacity of 50. The Children's Commission of Western Siberia established that the capacity of 1070 of the whole region had been exceeded, and the real number of children placed in different orphanages was 1702. This overload would imply a significant lack of resources in public education of orphan kulak children.[71]

The situation of these orphanages was chaotic. First of all because there was no overview of the situation: children came and left and no-one knew their exact whereabouts. The orphanages often lost contact with the children when they were moved to other facilities – for example if they were placed with other families. Names of the regions where the children were sent, the names of the cities and new addresses were almost always lost. They only explanation attached to their personal files would be "sent out to parents". This must suggest that a significant number of orphan kulak

[70] GATO, f. r-590, op.1, delo 1, ll. 12-13.
[71] GANO, f. r-895, op. 1, delo 184, l. 35.

children had run away from orphanages. Additionally, it was recorded that a significant number of children living in the orphanages suffered from illness. Of the sixteen school children living in an orphanage in Barnual only two were recorded as "healthy" the rest suffered from various diseases. Moreover, twenty-one pre-school children were recorded as "sick". The problem was also intensified by the fact that there were no proper bathrooms, dormitories, and lavatories. Children often slept two or three together in the same bed, and the air in the dormitories was poor. Finally, there was no proper sanitary facilities, and everything, including trained medical staff, was lacking. There was a doctor, but no nurses or nursing auxiliaries.[72] What is evident from this account is that the medical situation of orphan kulak children was extremely bad in 1935.

What is striking about this situation is that it appears to have been more permanent than one would expect, especially in light of the fact that the living conditions had stabilised by 1935. This becomes even clearer following the development from 1935 to 1937, as the problems in the orphanages still appears to have been numerous. On 16 June 1937 The Children Commission of Western Siberia (*Detkomissii po Zapsibkrai*) received a request from the head of the Novoselovskii orphanage in the *komendatura* of Kolpashev raion, as there was an insufficient supply of resources reaching this orphanage. In the annual budget of 1936 the orphanage was allocated 112,000 roubles from the *komendatura*, yet by June 1937, only 9000 roubles had arrived.[73] Not only was the orphanage underfinanced, but it was also the *komendatura* that was blocking the delivery of finances. The *komandatura* answered to the NKVD (which took over the OGPU in 1934), which emphasises the dilemma of the relationship to kulak children. The consequence of such priorities became apparent in September 1937 when the conditions in this and other orphanages were reported. The Novoselovskii orphanage housed 125 children from 4-16 years of age, and the situation was as problematic as it had been in 1935. Two to three children slept in the same bed, which intensified the level of epidemics in the orphanages and significantly jeopardised the sanitary situation in the home.[74] There were still complaints about the sanitary situation and the working conditions of the special settlements from the medical staff, as late as December 1937.[75] In 1940, an inspection team that had visited several orphanages in the special settlements complained about the conditions of the buildings, dormitories, canteens, and kitchens. Mattresses were dirty, children slept in the same bed together, special working clothes for the children were lacking, and fundamental repairs to the

[72] GANO, f. r-895, op. 1, delo 184, ll. 38-40.
[73] GATO, f. r-590, op. 1, delo 16, l. 21.
[74] GATO, f. r-590, op. 1, delo 16, l. 70.
[75] GATO, f. r-590, op. 1, delo 16, l. 1.

buildings were urgently required. About the issue of nourishment for the children it was asserted "The nourishment is unacceptable – dinner consist of only one dish"[76]

Despite the plans issued in order to rectify and stabilise the situation, in reality such measures had a very limited impact on the living conditions of the children. Infant mortality may have dropped in the special settlements as such and the birth-rate increased, but the attempts to rectify the sanitary conditions of the orphanages remained seriously inefficient as late as 1940. The consequence of this was wide-ranging: if the authorities wished to re-educate kulak children to become future Soviet citizens, the physical framework – in this case the orphanages – was in such a poor state that in practice it turned out to be extremely difficult to achieve this. When children voiced resistance in the orphanages, it must also have been against these poor living conditions. They vocalised a discontent, which the local school authorities interpreted as a sign of ideological disobedience – the authorities, in other words, were shorn of any responsibility.

*4.2.5 Responsibility for living conditions*

The question is who was responsible for the neglect of homeless kulak children living in the orphanages: was it the local authorities, handling the daily distributing of resources? Was it caused by the vast pressure created by incoming *besprizornye* to the orphanages? Was it "criminal neglect" caused by individual actions of local commandants in the komendatura? Or, was it a product of institutional policies laid out by the Stalinist leadership? Viola explains that, especially the initial phase – from the first months of 1930 to 1931 – the difficult situation of deportation and placement of kulaks and their families primarily was an outcome of conflict of interests and structural problems. The different levels of the Soviet system counteracted each other and this was not solved until the OGPU during 1930 took over the responsibility of constructing and administering the settlements.[77] Various agencies participated in the administration of the special settlements: the OGPU, the system of *komendatury*, the various Commissariats of Industries – most notably the timber and fishing industries – the People's Commissariat of Health, and the People's Commissariat of Education. The interests varied significantly of these departments and commissariats, as their approaches to the situation were different: in the view of the timber and fishing industries the special settlers and children as young as 12 years old were only conceived as "man-power" (*rabsila*). Their interest was anything but humanitarian – a fact largely supported by the OGPU and even Stalin

[76] GATO, f. r-590, op. 2, delo 128, l. 6.
[77] Lynne Viola, "The Other Archipelago: Kulak Deportation to the North in 1930" pp. 730-755 in *Slavic Review* 60/4, (winter 2001).

himself.[78] The People's Commissariat of Health, the People's Commissariat of Education, and the various Children's Commission (*detkomissii*) focussed on the human aspect of this development – not that they questioned the General Line, but their primary task was to assist sick settlers and children who had been abandoned.

This suggests that there was some sort of countervailing interest also within the system, which is considered "totalitarian". Yet, it is unclear as to whether this also changed the course of the system fundamentally – the conditions mentioned above especially among orphan kulak children would to some extent suggest that any measures undertaken by the Soviet system to rectify the living conditions were highly insufficient. It may very well be that even hardliners were concerned about the impact the dekulakisation policy had on the fate of children, yet the changes in the overall situation were on the whole limited. Even if there were initiatives to rectify and stabilise the living conditions of the special settlements, children continued to live under appalling circumstances until the late 1930s and even into the 1940s. The conditions of the 1940s can be explained as an outcome of the Second World War, where the whole country was suffering. However, conditions during the 1930s are difficult to explain as anything else but a result of a repressive Stalinist policy and neglect. It may be that the main concern of the Soviet regime was not to kill deported kulaks but rather to suppress and discipline them, yet the outcome was a mass production of corpses – including the corpses of children.[79] Even if the demographic situation was stabilised by 1935-36, life was never normal. From this point there can be no doubt, even if countervailing interests existed, that the leading organs of the Soviet system – that is the circle surrounding Stalin and his henchmen – bore the main responsibility for the course of action. It should be remembered that the Council of People's Commissariat (SNK) as early as August 1930 legitimised the maximal usage of settlers in the daily work of the region. As late as 1932 this decision had a devastating impact on kulak children, when the leading officials of GULAG lowered the age of "able bodied" settlers to 12 years. We should also remember that the financing of the stabilisation of the children's conditions, as Molotov ordered in 1932, had to come from the settlers themselves and not as a subsidy from the authorities – the resources had to be located within the wages of the special settlers. This order furthermore granted 1.89 roubles per child, which was completely inadequate.

The priorities of the Stalinist regime were to transform society ideologically – those opposed to the project were viewed as being "backward" or "primitive" and had to be "re-educated". From this

[78] See the debate within the OGPU in 1935 about the possibilities of returning pardoned kulaks and their families: Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the GULAG. From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, Yale University 2004, pp. 129-132.

[79] Anne Applebaum, *GULAG. A History*, London 2004, pp. 23-24.

perspective it may be that the experiences of kulak children was unintended; however, the "project" could not allow the authorities to retreat from the General Line. This also implied that even if orders were issued, the resources to successfully implement the changes were only rarely available. Therefore, it is necessary to nuance the meaning of stabilisation: it was not a return to life as it had been before the forceful banishment of unwanted elements from society; neither was it an eradication of the experiences these people already had been subjected. Stabilisation was in this case a matter of putting a temporary fix on an open wound.

## 4.3 The socio-historical context

Did the living conditions in the special settlements, and thus the fate of first and second category kulak children, differ significantly from that of society as a whole? The scope is now widened in order to discuss the demographic development among children in Soviet society in the 1930s. Infant mortality had always been high within the rural parts of the Russian Empire. Pre-revolutionary Russia had one of the highest, if not the highest infant mortality rates in Europe. In a comparison between Russian Jews, Muslims in the Volga regions, and Russians, David Ransel has shown that infant mortality was especially high among Russian peasant families. Between 43.2% and 54.5% of all children, depending on which region of the country is analysed, died before their fifth birthday. Almost one-third of all Russian infants died before their first birthday, which, even when other Slavic nationalities, like Ukrainian and Byelorussian are included in the comparison, is significantly high. Ransel argues convincingly that the explanation lies in cultural rather than environmental reasons, as all children of the Russian empire, Jewish, Muslim, Ukrainian, Russian and other nationalities, were exposed to the same environmental conditions. Three reasons are given: firstly, the high consumption of alcohol among Russian women; secondly, syphilis, and, thirdly, the poor hygienic circumstances during birth. A fourth explanation was the harsh living condition of the peasant family. Women, like men, engaged in manual work in the agricultural workforce. Subsequently, many children were left alone in the house for hours, exposing them to greater risk, which had an accumulative effect on the mortality rate.[80]

Infant mortality remained high after the October Revolution, and had not been rectified significantly in the 1930s. Davies and Wheatcroft amount that the infant mortality rate for the whole Soviet Union had been 174 per thousand in 1926, and had only dropped slightly to 161 per thousand in 1939. There is no specification on the age group of the children at the time of death. In

[80] David L. Ransel, *Mothering, Medicine, and Infant Mortality in Russia: Some Comparisons*, pp. 4-5.

a recent analysis of the development, conducted by Zhiromskaya, we learn that in 1933 718,700 children died before their first birthday in the Soviet Union. This number comprised 14.4% of the total death rate in the Soviet Union for 1933. This number dropped in 1934 to 537,000, yet the infant mortality rate comprised 20.4% of the total death rate (indicating that the proportion of dying children increased in comparison to 1933). In 1935 the number of infant deaths increased to 706,100, implying a serious worsening in the situation. This negative development continued until the end of the 1930s, and in 1939 1,053,600 children would die before their first birthday. Not only was this a dramatically rise in the total number of infant death, but the proportion of the total number of dead children also rocketed from 14.4% in 1933 to 35.4% in 1939.[81] This clearly suggests that infant mortality increased dramatically throughout the 1930s. One explanation would be a fall in the living standard caused by the preceding chaos of the 1930s. Another was the impact of dekulakisation, famine and political repression by 1937 – the social breakdown of Soviet society must also have had a negative impact on the demographic situation of children.

**Table 12**: Estimation of Infant mortality in the USSR and Russian federation from 1933-1939 (in thousand)

| Year | USSR | | Russian federation | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fixed number | % of the total death | Fixed number | % of the total death |
| 1933 | 718,7 | 14.4 | 602,9 | 20.5 |
| 1934 | 537,5 | 20.4 | 454,1 | 22.9 |
| 1935 | 706,1 | 27.5 | 576,7 | 28.9 |
| 1936 | 938,1 | 31.5 | 747,4 | 32.9 |
| 1937 | 1031,3 | 34.4 | 762,1 | 34.8 |
| 1938 | 1023,3 | 34.6 | 757,4 | 35.4 |
| 1939 | 1053,6 | 35,4 | 781,0 | 36.5 |

(Source: V.B. Zhiromskaya, *Демографическая история России в 1930-е годы*, Moscow 2001, p. 23 (Table 4))

*4.3.1 The conditions of Soviet children in the 1930s*

The death of at least 5.7 million people during the famine in 1932-33 emphasises that the human privation of the 1930s was not limited to a specific sector of Soviet society – and therefore not

[81] V.B. Zhiromskaya, *Демографическая история россии в 1930-е годы*, Moscow 2001, p. 23.

something that just existed in the special settlements. In late 1932 the medical authorities registered a massive growth of epidemics and mortality in society. The Ukrainian Red Cross, for example, submitted a report on the health situation in the Odessa region in this particular period. From this we learn that two doctors, eight nurses and twenty-two voluntary workers in June 1932 investigated conditions of: 1) the local hospitals, 2) the local nurseries and nursery schools, 3) nourishment in these nurseries and nursery schools; 4) the sanitary situation among children; 5) medical assistance in society; and 6) the sanitary work of the city. The significant aspect of the conclusion is that

> The majority of children were dirty, lice-infected, looking depressed, reacting slowly to questions. They were constantly laying or sitting down as a consequence of exhaustion and dehydration... The death rate in the hospitals is 8 %... An insufficient quantity of products of an extraordinarily tainted quality is distributed to children in the nurseries...
>
> (source: TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 5310, ll. 33-34)

It is relevant to mention that the inspection team of the Ukrainian Red Cross especially was focusing on local villages, and thus also upon children of both *kolkhozniki* and *edinolichniki* (individual peasants). Despite the previous collectivisation campaign, private holders remained and lived outside the collective farms. The document does not reveal who these *edinolichniki* were, but it seems plausible that they included third category kulaks not being deported, but instead re-settled outside the collective farms. Therefore, this report has great significance for our understanding of the condition of the children of poor and middle peasants and the remaining third category kulaks.[82] An important element of this survey concerned the sanitary conditions of several villages and towns surrounding Odessa. A statistic regarding the situation in May and June 1932 in Nizhnii-Mirgorod raion was released, and it dealt with the proportion of the sick. The subjects being investigated were divided into three categories: the elderly, adults, and children. Of the total of 860 sick in the village of Panchevo, the elderly comprised 236, adults 302, and children 322. A similar pattern was detected in Kalezh where children comprised 258 out of the total 663, the elderly 180, and adults 225. The distribution varied slightly in Martynoshcha where it was the elderly, who comprised the largest proportion of the total – 324 of the 767 – children comprised 249, and adults 194. The conclusion which can be drawn from this and the above elaboration on infant mortality in general is that the

[82] TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 5310, ll. 33-34.

distribution detected in the special settlements where children made up if not the largest, then a significant share of the total number of those affected, can also be found in Soviet society as a whole during this period. 1932 generally appears to have been a period of widespread epidemic.[83] This became increasingly apparent by the autumn of 1932, when famine intensified.

**Table 13**: Proportion of the sick in selected town of the N-Mirgorodskii Raion of Southern Ukraine by May-June 1932

| | Elderly | Adults | Children |
|---|---|---|---|
| Palchevo | 236 | 302 | 322 |
| Kalezh | 180 | 225 | 258 |
| Martynoshcha | 324 | 194 | 249 |

(source: TSDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 5310, l. 35)

Another feature of the legacy of collectivisation was naturally the living conditions among those *besprizornye*, who were not related to either first or second category kulaks. Although they comprised a significant proportion in those regions they were deported – such as Western Siberia, Northern Russia, Ural and Kazakhstan – not all of the homeless or abandoned children were related to these designated class enemies. Here, we focus primarily on two aspects: public resources generally used to assist *besprizornye* and the living conditions in those orphanages not located in the system of special settlements. Ukraine was ravaged by this social problem, as this republic was one of the main agricultural regions of the Soviet Union, and the preceding collectivisation campaign had a devastating impact upon its social, economic and political situation. Ukraine was not the only region in the Soviet Union thus affected; however, it appears indisputable that this Soviet republic was significantly influenced by previous policies. The structure of many Ukrainian peasant families was dissolved as a result of the preceding collectivisation campaign. On 2 May 1935, that is approximately a month before the Council of People's Commissariat of the Soviet Union (SNK SSSR) issued the decree on "the liquidation of *besprizornosti* and *beznadzornosti*", a report about the situation in the south-eastern Ukrainian oblast of Dneprepotrovsk was sent to Kossior, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, and to Liubchenko the chairman of the People's Commissariat of the Ukrainian Soviet republic. Herein we find two pieces

[83] TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 5310, l. 35.

of relevant information. Firstly, it is significant that the number of orphans increased dramatically from 1 August 1934 to April 1935. While the number was 6200 in 1934, by 1935 it had increased to 10,873. This supports the impression that the situation for children was dramatic. Secondly, it is notable that resource supplies did not correspond to the actual needs in Dneprepotrovsk: the relevant officials appealed for another fifty thousand metres of cloth fabrics, fifteen thousand meters of mattresses, 800 pairs of trousers, six thousand pairs of shoes, eleven thousand duvets and seven thousand pairs of cloth fabrics.[84] This reveals that additional children to those related to the first and second category kulaks, lived in dire circumstances.

This became even clearer in another report issued by Z. Katsenelson the deputy chairman of the Ukrainian People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, to Kossior, Liubchenko and Postyshev in 25 November 1935. The report dealt with the living conditions of homeless children in the sovkhozy, kolkhozy and industrial areas of Ukraine. The total number of *besprizornye* in these three sectors was 112,000. The majority of departments of public education had no or only very little interest in the situation of these children. The physical state of the existing orphanages was so poor that they were unsuitable for childcare. Regarding childcare, the quantity of beds was insufficient, as in relation to those orphanages placed in Narym, and children had to sleep in the same bed together. This was a general problem. In the kolkhoz "12 let Kr. Armii" (located in Odessa Oblast) it was reported that boys and girls slept naked on the floor; in another kolkhoz "Khleborob" (also located in Odessa) it was reported that children existed only on bread, were poorly dressed, hungry and without supervision; in a third orphanage, also located in Odessa, healthy children had scabies. Similar scenes were reported in Vinnitsa, Kiev, Stalino and Kharkov.[85] These reports suggest that the low priorities within the Soviet authorities regarding living conditions in the orphanages were not only related to kulak children – that is those who had been deported. From this perspective it can be argued that there was nothing unique about the living conditions of kulak children, and thus the conditions found in, for example, the Narym orphanages may have reflected a general trend in Soviet society rather than a specific problem in the system of the special settlements.

## 4.4 Similarities and differences

Although not every Soviet citizen was victimised by the ongoing warfare against society, and even if some lived a comparatively normal life (going to cinemas, theatres, reading books and general

[84] TsDAGO, f. 20, op. 20, delo 6645, ll. 11-12.
[85] Ibid., ll. 18-21.

were happy)[86] it is evident that the attack on Soviet agriculture from 1929 onwards was much more wide-ranging than simply a matter of liquidating a certain kulak class. It is, however, on a very banal level apparent that even if the living conditions of the 1930s were generally characterised by a demographic drop and social instability, life in the special settlements was different. The special settlers comprised a significant element of what has been termed "Stalin's forced labour economy".[87] The deported kulaks were reduced to "*rabsila*" and were exploited to the absolute maximum in the timber and fishing industries, and within the many ambitious construction complexes in the Soviet Union. The work was extremely physically demanding, and the kulaks were treated much more ruthlessly than other workers who had voluntarily come to the construction sites. Given that this was an outcome of dekulakisation, the consequence of the maltreatment of the special settlers was limited: they had to work, despite the low food rations, and they were "dispensable" (a dead person could easily be replaced by another deportee).[88] Even if the living conditions in the special settlements was stabilised by the mid-1930s, the purpose of the settlers remained the same, which became increasingly evident when in 1934 they were termed *trudposelentsy* – working settlers.[89]

Society may have been "the big camp"[90]; however, life in the special settlements was notably different: it was primarily a penal system, affecting the families of the accused; secondly, the settlers being interred would, be regarded as second class citizens. This was evident when a majority of them lost their rights, and became "lishentsy" ("social outcast"). But even when kulak children had their voting rights restored by 1934 they could not simply leave the settlements. This was, as we saw above, still a fact when they in October 1938 received the right to gain a passport – kulak children were never allowed to return to their places of origin. Thirdly, even if mortality, epidemics, and starvation were common occurrences in the Soviet Union, it was far more widespread in the settlements. Stephen Wheatcroft argues that the death-rate was four to five times

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[86] Robert Conquest asserted in one of many tense debates with Robert Thurston: "At the height of *Ezhovshchina*, life went on, games were played, holidays taken, people went to theatres, young people danced and wooed. And if Thurston supposed that those who have used general expressions like "terror now ranged in the USSR" or (Anna Akhmatova's phrase) "innocent Russia withered" thought otherwise, this shows a certain desk-bound parochialism and lack of commonsense perspective. As to Thurston's bugbear of a "total fear' theory", this commentator has never heard of it..." See: Robert Conquest, "What is Terror" pp. 235-237 in *Slavic Review* 45:2, 1986 p. 235 and Robert Thurston, "On Desk-Bound Parochialism, Commonsense Perspectives, and Lousy Evidence: A Reply to Robert Conquest" pp. 238-244 in *Slavic Review* 45:2, 1986.

[87] See: Charles A. Orr (ed.) *Stalin's Slave Camps. An Indictment of Modern Slavery*, Bruxelles 1951 and David J. Dallin and Boris Nicolaevsky, *Slavearbejde i Sovet*, København 1949.

[88] Sergei Krasilnikov, *Серп и молох. Крестьянская ссылка в западной Сибири в 1930-е годы*, Moscow 2003, chapter 5 (titled "Рабсила").

[89] Zemskov, 2005, p. 18.

[90] As argued in Erik Kulavig, *Stalins Hjemmefront 1941-1945*, Odense 2004.

higher in the GULAG than in society as a whole, and that during the famine years of 1932/33 the death-rate was more than ten times higher.[91] The system of special settlements was a cornerstone of the GULAG, and this elaboration has great significance. The living conditions of the special settlements were worse than those of the prison camps it appears: food supplies were much more irregular, which implies that the lack of resources was even more common in the settlements than in other camps.[92] In addition, there is the importance of the deportations. This was not a variant of social mobilisation, as with the massive mobilisation of people moving to enormous construction sites as found in Magnitagorsk,[93] nor was it akin to migration, as when peasants moved from the countryside into the cities.[94] Rather it was a forceful and repressive banishment of unwanted elements from society, carried through with such cynicism that a significant number of designated kulaks and their families – and others stigmatised as "enemies of the people" – died as a direct result.[95] The deportations reveal the true nature of the diseased power in the Soviet state: the regime considered itself superior to all moral questions and deported human beings at will in the name of ideology.

This feeling of supremacy and the willingness to neglect and dehumanise individuals in the name of a higher ideal has clear similarities to Nazi Germany. It was a mechanical understanding of the world order, where redundant components could be removed and placed in specially established facilities. Or, to put it differently, it was a scientific comprehension of the nature of the development, where society could be adjusted and made "perfect" with those opposing it removed and reinstalled elsewhere: "out of sight, out of mind". From this point of view redundant components, that is enemies of the state, had no emotional feelings – the regime could remove children from their parents without considering the human consequences of doing so. This makes the kulak deportations and the living conditions in the special settlements, quite different from what happened in society as a whole: this was prison and these people got punished not for what they had done, but for who they were.

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[91] Wheatcroft, 1996, p. 1346.

[92] This information was given to the author during a discussion with Vasilli Khanovich from the local department of *Memorial* in Tomsk.

[93] See Stephen Kotkin *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, London 1995.

[94] See Gijs Kessler, *The Peasant and the Town. Rural-Urban Migration in the Soviet Union, 1929-40*, (unpublished Doctoral Thesis submitted in 2001 at the European University Institute in Florence).

[95] Pavel Polian, *Не по своей воле. История и география принудительных миграции в СССР*, Moscow 2001.

## 5. Education of kulak children

Soviet childhood became increasingly ideological by the mid-1930s, and this may be one of the many reasons for Stalin's statement in November 1935 that a kulak child did not answer for his or her fathers. A good field to investigate such developments is in the schools and in the public education of children in general and kulak children in particular. Here we will focus on the relation between the kulak children and society. The question to be addressed is how kulak children were defined in public education and propaganda in the 1930s, and whether this differed significantly from how other Soviet children were defined in general.

This will primarily be discussed by using archival material from the West Siberian region of Narym. Some of the issues will also be covered using material from the archives of Kiev, giving us a possibility of also understanding the developments in the regions from which kulak children were deported. The material from Narym means that we are primarily analysing the education of those children in deportation, which also implies that they must have been related to the first and second category kulaks. Consequently it may be argued that these children, who were probably considered the most dangerous by the regime, might have been defined differently from children of third category kulaks. It is, nonetheless, difficult to distinguish these three categories of children from each other as the documents are rarely specific.[1] Hence it will be asserted that even if the archival material used mainly addresses the situation in deportation – that is among first and second category kulak children – the general considerations must have corresponded to how the Soviet state defined all three categories of kulak children – with the possibility that the authorities adopted a less restrictive line towards the third category kulak children.

### 5.1 The Kulak Children and Soviet education

The Soviet newspaper, *Комсомолець України*, discussed the relation of education and class struggle in a long article on the "Struggle for collectivisation" (18 February 1930). The argument put forward was that kulaks had infiltrated the schools and influenced children by their "counterrevolutionary work". Therefore, it was necessary to *mobilise* children through education against these elements.[2] Education was conceived as means of mobilisation, whereby children could

[1] See for example the consideration of the relationship between schools, the pioneer organisation and kulak children in Ukraine from 1930: "Про дітей куркулів в початковій, середній, вишій школі" in TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 3088, ll. 8-10.

[2] "У боях за колективізацію"in *Комсомолець України*, 18 February 1930, p. 4.

be made useful citizens participating consciously in the construction of a new society. Thus, the strong anti-kulak rhetoric also permeated the discourse of education. Teachers were expected to participate in the harsh attack upon kulaks and denounce them as enemies of Soviet education. This also made the teachers vulnerable, and there are several examples of physical assault upon them carried out by angry villagers and designated kulaks.[3] The question is how kulak children were defined by the Soviet educational authorities in this context of class struggle. The nature of the relationship between them and the regime must have been unveiled here, since education: "...could not be ideologically neutral".[4]

That the education of kulak children and kulak adolescents had some priorities can be seen from a meeting held by a special commission of the Politburo on 15 May 1931. It was chaired by A.A. Andreev and among the participants were key figures in the Soviet command structure such as Postyshev, Genrikh Yagoda, Evdokimov, Nikolaev, Ol'shanskii and Matvei Berman. Their main focus was upon the development of the special settlements, and they among other things addressed the question of the younger settlers, and how they were being educated.

On the Young Special Settlers

> The OGPU suggests in its organisational, economic and administrative work to afford special attention to the young and to use all means to attract them to work, placing them on a special level, in developing among them collective methods and not enlarge the same strict routines, which is spread out by the head of the family [...]
>
> (Source: G.M. Adibekov, "Спецпереселенцы – жертвы «сплошной коллективизации». Из документов «особой папки» Политбюро ЦК ВКП(б)" in *Исторический архив*, Volume 2, number 4, 1994, p. 158).

The young settlers had to have their "collective methods" refined, indicating that education was to restructure their way of conceiving production. An OGPU plan, issued on 6 June 1931 asserts that "the work among the young" was a matter of "Demonstrating special attention in deportation to the young kulak with the goal of re-educating them, through attraction of production, organisation of young hardworking brigades, and implementation of socialist methodological work".[5]

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[3] Larry Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse. Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, Indiana, Michigan 1991, p. 132.
[4] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Ithaca 1992, p. 92.
[5] V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири. Весна 1931-Начало 1933г.*, Novosibirsk 1993, pp. 41-42.

It is important to emphasis that this idea of creating Soviet citizens corresponds with the fundamental characteristic of public Soviet education throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Soviet government was – at least until the mid-1930s – convinced that it was environment and not biology, which shaped behaviour, and subsequently a child, if subjected to the correct teaching, could be brought up according to the needs of the Soviet state.[6] The purpose of Soviet pedagogy, whether it was related to "enemy" children or children in general, was to create a "new Soviet man". This was not an easy task, since other institutions, such as the nuclear family, the Tsarist intelligentsia, or the heritage of the pre-revolutionary schools, intervened and undermined its effectiveness. Nonetheless, it was a theory that such a transformation could be achieved if the state assumed responsibility for the upbringing of children.[7] This broader context explains in part why the Soviet regime concentrated its attention on the education of kulak children. However, there was a significant difference: the main feature of the dekulakisation policy was to undermine the social position of kulaks, and their children were their *achilles heel*. Non-enemy families had the possibility of influencing their children's upbringing, since the Soviet state never managed to abolish this social institution completely. Kulaks, or more specifically first and second category kulaks, were marginalized much more efficiently in relation to their children, given that they were deported or incarcerated the nuclear family was often dismantled.[8] Public education related to kulak children was not simply a matter of shaping a "new Soviet man", but also of preventing certain unwanted elements – their parents – from influencing the socialisation of their offspring.

The significance of this became clear when examining a number of applications from kulak children regarding the restitution of their civil rights, which (as we saw in chapter 3), was discussed in 1933 and 1934.[9] Most of the applicants received a positive response, which indicates that some kulak children received voting rights.[10] It is interesting to read the application of these children, as they reveal important aspects of the nature of the relationship between kulak children and the Soviet authorities. Children had to assure the authorities of their commitment to the construction of the future society, and show that they were conscious of the class hostility of their parents. They wrote their application aware that someone in a higher position in the system could reject them. Such an

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[6] Lynne Attwood, *The New Soviet Man and Woman. Sex-Role Socialization in the USSR*, London 1990, pp. 35ff.
[7] W. Berelowithch, *La soviétisation de l'école russe 1917-1931*, Lausanne, 1990, p. 12-13.
[8] Bent Jensen, *GULAG og Glemsel. Ruslands tragedie og Vestens hukommelsestab i det 20. århundrede*, Copenhagen 2002, pp. 179-180.
[9] V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири. 1933-1938*, Novosibirsk 1994, pp. 14 and 55.
[10] See; GATO f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2806, l. 1; GATO, f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2867, l. 1; GATO f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2878, l. 2; GATO f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2894, l. 2; and GATO, f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2903, l. 2.

idea is revealed in the letter of Elizabet Kirilovich Zykova, who was born in 1916 and deported to Narym from Ukraine with her parents as "member of a kulak family" in 1931 and employed as a measurer in the local West Siberian timber industry in 1933. On 30 November 1935 she addressed the local authorities of the Tomsk city Soviet – the central administrative centre of the oblast. Despite being nineteen years old Zykova still lived in a local orphanage. After having outlined her participation in the proposed educational programme, gaining work in the local timber industry, and showing sincere participation in the transformation of society, she finished the letter by saying:

> I ... urge Tomsk city Soviet to restore [in Russian *восстановит*] my right as a full citizen. I ask you not to reject my request...
> (Source: GATO, F. R-430, op. 3, delo 2806, l. 2)

As a kulak child Zykova knew that as long as she was identified with her parents, she would be considered a non-citizen and even an "outcast". At the same time she was also aware that the system could reject her attempt, and term it unsatisfactory – which the last sentence suggests. Such an idea would also imply that the restitution of the civil rights of kulak children implied a near complete subordination to the demands of the authorities.

*5.1.1 Life chances*

What were the demands of the Soviet authorities? This is partly revealed in an article in the Siberian newspaper *Советский Север* ("*The Soviet North*") of 22 May 1936. It stated: "The illiterate and the semi-literate can not be conscious constructors of socialist society, and therefore the Party and the Soviet government has conducted and still conducts a determined battle for the completion of liquidating illiteracy and semi-literacy [...]". Moreover that "Comrade Stalin teaches us that for the triumph of Communism it is necessary to have a working class with a [high] cultural and technical level [...]".[11] The ultimate goal of Soviet education was not literacy in itself, but rather a literate working class, aware of the values of Communism. The impression that the teaching of kulak children was dominated by such discourse is supported by the Soviet education programme from 1937-38 issued in Narym. The pupils of this region, who were largely kulak children, were to be taught "constitution" for fourteen lessons during the summer semester – later this was increased to another twenty lessons on "Soviet constitution". In comparison "Russian language" and

[11] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1431, l. 8

"mathematics" comprised fifty-six and sixty lessons. It is important to notice that a teacher only attended half the "Russian" and "mathematics" lessons, whereas "constitution" had a full-time teacher.[12] Therefore, Russian and mathematics only had an effective teaching of thirty lessons each within the whole summer term, whereas "constitution" and "Soviet constitution" had thirty-four lessons. This implies that political education had a very high priority. Unfortunately, the content of such education is not revealed in the document, and it is difficult to say anything about what "constitution" and "Soviet constitution" in reality meant. However, it is evident that the aim was to replace the traditional and religious upbringing of the kulak family with the political indoctrination of the state.

**Table 1**: The content of the Narym school programme in 1937-38

| Subject | Planned teaching | Effective teaching |
|---|---|---|
| Russian | 56 hours per term | 30 hours per term |
| Mathematic | 60 hours per term | 30 hours per term |
| Constitution | 14 hours per term | 14 hours per term |
| Soviet Constitution | 20 hours per term | 20 hours per term |

(Source: GANO, F. 61, op. 1, delo 1498, ll. 75-78)

The Pioneers and Komsomol members were responsible for this political education, which can be seen in many documents from the 1930s.[13] In May 1929 the local party committee of the Siberian town of Achinskii, for example, published a proclamation on "...strengthening the leadership and the involvement of the Pioneer organisation in the societal and political work of the cities and the countryside".[14] This suggests that children were to mobilise other children politically in order to secure the maintaining of political power by the local Communist Party. In two Soviet official documents, written in 1935 and 1937, the responsible committees spoke of a "communist upbringing of children" independently.[15] A number of plans were issued throughout the 1930s in order to construct Pioneer clubs, children's clubs or Komsomol clubs, all of which were to undertake the "...work of mass upbringing among children".[16] Pupils were generally termed

[12] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1498, L. 75-78.
[13] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1127, l. 4 and GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1452, ll. 17-18.
[14] Vasilii Novokshonov, *«В тридцаты – комендатурские.(очерки по истории тегульдетского район)»*, с. Тегульдет 1993, p. 6.
[15] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1272, l. 10 and GANO, f. r-895, op. 2, delo 4, l. 16.
[16] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1272, l. 8.

"vospitanniki" – those to be brought up – and education as "vospitanie".[17] The pupils were to undergo "politvospitanie" or political education.[18]

The Soviet authorities constructed 1,105 elementary, 370 preparation and 136 middle schools in the whole system of the special settlements. Additionally, it built 230 schools for higher technical education and twelve technical colleges in this sector. There were 217,454 pupils in the schools of the special settlements, distributed on each level of the educational system, and a total of 8,280 teachers.[19] Having in mind that 378,877 children and adolescents younger than 16 years old lived in the special settlements by October 1941, this implies that 57.4% of the total number of deported children were admitted to either of the schools.[20] It is important to remember that not every child in the special settlements had reached school age, as a substantial number of the deported children were either babies or infants. This means that the percentage of kulak children attending schools (old enough to actually do so) must have been higher than the 57.4%. Aside from the schools the authorities also constructed 813 clubs, 1,202 reading rooms, 440 cinemas and 1,149 libraries in the settlements.[21] This reveals a certain priority of the "political-cultural work among the young settlers", although there is little information on the distribution of these institutions among the individual settlements. By 15 December 1935 the SNK SSSR and Central Committee of the Communist Party likewise approved that children of the special settlers could be admitted into a higher educational institutions.[22] We discussed the reservations concerning the rehabilitation of kulak children in chapter, by asserting that most directives issued by the Soviet authorities during the 1930s were contradicting. Yet the approval of December 1935 at least indicates that the Soviet system in theory was willing to offer kulak children a possibility to achieve an education (which on a longer term could improve their possibilities of being reintegrated into society). Also, it implies that the Soviet state was very interested in establishing institutions (schools as well as clubs) that could fulfil the political education of kulak children in deportation.

Another institution that participated in the political education of children was the army. All males were at the age of 18 enrolled in the ranks of the Red Army. Upon entering they were often either illiterate or semi-literate, which was changed due to intense education during their service. Many of these young men received their basic education in the army as part of the "liquidation of illiteracy",

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[17] GANO, f. r-895, op. 1, d. 154, l. 253.
[18] S.S. Vilenskii et al., *Дети ГУЛАГа 1918-1956*, Moscow 2002, p. 143.
[19] S.I. Golotik and V.V. Minaev, *Население и власть. Очерки демографической истории СССР 1930-х годов*, Moscow, 2004, p. 120.
[20] V.N. Zemskov, *Спецпереселенцы в СССР 1930-1960*, Moscow 2005, pp. 98-99 (Table 19).
[21] Golotik and Minaev, 2004, p. 120.
[22] Ibid., p. 120.

and would have their identity shaped by this institution. As a participant of the first Stakhanovite congress in November 1935 stressed: "The Red Army not only teaches how to shoot, but also socialises, and teaches how to build our socialist society".[23] During their basic education these young men were subjected to patriotic propaganda, in which they were taught to be the saviours and heroes of the Soviet Union, and this is only for those who served their compulsory military service, and were employed in another sector of society. These men often returned to the countryside and were re-integrated into the kolkhozy, sovkhozy, MTS and other similar institutions of newly collectivised agriculture. When it came to those men who made a career in the army, it is possible that they were even more influenced by the rhetoric of the Soviet state in their daily work. Therefore, the impact of the state upon the generation, born after 1917 was immense and the political influence great.[24] Soviet research shows that some kulak children were enlisted as soldiers in the Red Army during the Second World War, although it is important to remember that they were not allowed to be conscripted before the outbreak of the war. The latter implies that the Soviet regime remained suspicious towards kulak children, until it was absolutely necessary to redefine the policy towards them. It is possible that those kulak children enlisted as soldiers would be affected by the education they received in the army, not the least because the patriotic propaganda was particularly intense during the war. [25] However, they would probably still be addressed as second grate soldiers by the Soviet authorities. The plea of Elizabet Kirilovich Zykova mentioned above, nonetheless, reveals how important many kulak children found such re-integration.

The question is why kulak children were eager to be reintegrated into society. In order to understand this, it is necessary to address the complexity of their life chances. When associated with their kulak parents the children were excluded, isolated and denied the most basic rights. Being a kulak child meant that he or she, if related to a first or second category kulak, lived in an area far away from their place of origin. They were non-citizens or social outcast like their parents, with limited chances of surviving. Such experiences (including the physically demanding transportation many had experienced) had, with good reason, left the impression among them that the alternative to the Stalinist way of living involved a life with increased mortality, disease epidemics and hunger. Alternatives to the Soviet system resulted in a person becoming a complete outsider or a "Blatnoi". Not everyone considered this as an alternative, therefore a majority of the excluded children logically decided to adhere to the demands of the Soviet regime. Under such circumstances it is not

[23] *Первое всесоюзное совещание рабочих и рабониц СТАХАНОВЦЕВ*, Moscow 1935, p. 49.
[24] Viktor Zaslavsky, *The neo-Stalinist state: class, ethnicity, and consensus in Soviet society*, New York 1982.
[25] David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956*, Cambridge Mass. 2002.

surprising that kulak children desired the inclusion promised to them if they participated in the required education and socialisation. To survive, and be considered citizens of the Soviet Union, clearly required that kulak children became either members of the komsomol, the Communist Party, the trade union, had an education, an internal passport and a residence permit. All of these also required that kulak children distanced themselves from their family background – even if it was not always a guarantee. Without this it was difficult to find proper work or even to exist. There were subsequently only very few options for kulak children: either they accepted the premises of the Soviet state and renounced their kulak background, or they remained outcasts like their parents constantly living under threat of the Soviet state. The wish of kulak children to be included in society can be understood in the words of Sheila Fitzpatrick as "survival strategies": they had to survive and had to develop strategies in order to do so, even renouncing their parents[26]

*5.1.2 Kulak children and education*

Political education reflected the way children in general were shaped by the Soviet state.[27] On several occasions kulak children lived alongside "non-enemy" children, which raises an uncertainty as to what extent there was a distinction between them.[28] Nonetheless, kulak children were treated differently from other children, and were constantly subjected to a general distrust by the authorities. It was, for example, difficult to find schools for kulak children in the initial phase of the dekulakisation process, which seems paradoxically in the light of the abovementioned elaboration on the quantity of schools, clubs and institutions of higher education in the special settlements. Something, nonetheless, suggests that kulak children were not given the same educational opportunities as other children. The lack of schools during the initial construction phase of the special settlements in 1930 forced the authorities to use facilities located outside the settlements in the nearby villages.[29] In theory this was an easy manoeuvre, since the children simply had to be removed to a school in a village. In reality it turned out to be problematic, and the OGPU realised in 1932 that a number of kulak children were denied access to these schools due to the resistance of teachers and other local officials – these officials did not distinguish between kulak children and their parents. The OGPU was concerned about the rejection of kulak children from classrooms, because it jeopardised the intention of eradicating the links between the generations of the

[26] Fitzpatrick, 1994, pp. 241ff.
[27] For more on this see: TsDAGO, f.1, op. 20, delo 6643, ll. 41-42.
[28] Maria Mishenchinka and Aleksandr Toshchev, *«Мы из Игарки» Не детская судьба детской книги*, Moscow 2000, p. 11.
[29] Viola, "Tear the evil...", 2000, pp. 53ff.

designated class enemies: if children were not allowed to attend school, how could they be exposed to the intended political indoctrination? Therefore, it was stressed that this procedure had to be changed immediately, and that kulak children should be permitted access to the schools outside the settlements.[30]

Exclusion from the schools remained a problem for kulak children until at least the mid-1930s. In 1936 the West Siberian department of the People's Commissariat of Education recorded a widespread illiteracy and semi-literacy among the deported kulaks and their relatives. It was stated in Narym that 18,151 of the 35,914 illiterates lived within the special settlements, which again implies that the deportees comprised more than 50% of the total illiterates and semi-literates of the region. This would suggest that the special settlers had not received even the basic teaching, and consequently some remained excluded from the classrooms. Aside from this aspect, it is clear that the main ambition of educating kulak children was to renounce the agricultural tradition of their parents and by this we find a very important aspect of dekulakisation – that is to remove all traces of the kulaks from society. The children were given new skills unrelated to the farming traditions of their kulak parents. The homeless kulak children of Narym were, for example, prepared for work in the timber and fishing industries:

**Table 2**: Professions of kulak children in deportation

1. Timber industry (*lespromkhozy*)
2. Sawmill (*leszavody*)
3. Machine Tractor Stations (*MTS*)
4. Train service (*Khozstantsi*)
5. District union of consumption (*okrpotrebsoiuz*)
6. Fishing industry (*rybtrest*)
7. Fur industry (*sibpushnina*)
8. Multiple union of industries (*Mnogopromsoiuz*)
9. Typography
10. Timber chemistry
11. Post services
12. Trading (*Sibtorg*)

(Source: GATO, F. R-591, op.1, d. 97 ll. 88 and 90)

[30] Adibekov, 1994, pp. 158ff.

What is significant about this table is that all of the jobs were related to work located within the region of their special settlements. Kulak children were given a formal right to leave the settlements in October 1938, however, they almost never returned to their place of birth.[31] And this right also had, as seen above, special notations with residency restrictions. When made possible kulak children moved to the larger towns of the region and some gained higher education and found more permanent work there. In the case of Western Siberia this would indicate that kulak children primarily moved to Novosibirsk, Tomsk, and Omsk. These children were almost never allowed to live in Moscow, Leningrad or other more prestigious places.[32] The Soviet regime had quite efficient means to control this: namely the passport. All applications had to be handled by the local authorities that is the work place, house administration, or in the case of the special settlers the *komendatura*. The social background, and especially kulak ties, in this context did have great negative significance.[33] It is possible that kulak children, as in the case of the voting rights, were able to gain a passport – however, their social background would almost always be known to someone within the Soviet system. Thus, it was also more difficult for them to get a permanent residence permits in the larger cities.

### *5.1.3 Problems of political education*

The Soviet authorities had to consider who would be appropriate for fulfilling the required work of educating kulak children and how such teaching could be successfully carried through. Viola argues that one of the initial problems of 1930 when the deportation of kulaks and their families first began, was the recruitment of trustworthy teachers. When the construction of the system of special settlements was in its initial stage everything was missing – for example the whole system of schools had to be established out of nothing. Therefore, the only teachers to be hired under such circumstances were the deported kulaks. Thus, the regime was confronted by a dilemma: how could the education be carried through satisfactorily if the enemies of the people conducted the teaching themselves?[34] Such speculation regarding the trustworthiness of Soviet officials also applied to how

[31] Jonathan Bone has elaborated on what happened to the kulaks afterwards: see: Jonathan Bone, "Peasant Life after the Gulag" (discussion paper presented at the annual convention of AASSS 20-23 November 2003 held in Toronto).
[32] This information was given to the author in August 2003 during a conversation with the Siberian professor, S.A. Krasilnikov, who is a descendent of a kulak.
[33] Gijs Kessler, *The Peasant and the Town. Rural-Urban Migration in the Soviet Union, 1929-40* (unpublished Ph.d. Thesis submitted at the European University Institute, 2001).
[34] Viola, "Tear the Evil", 2000, p. 54.

the Soviet authorities in general strove to solve the question of the political organisation of society – who were reliable?[35]

Closely connected to this is the problem of recruiting trustworthy Komsomol and Pioneer members from among the kulak children. When elaborating upon the content of education it was established that the matter of "constitution" – including "Soviet constitution" was of great significance and that it had to be carried through by the Komsomol and Pioneer members. As in the recruitment of teachers, the Stalinist regime had to enrol the members of these two organisations from among the kulak children. From a quantitative perspective the recruitment was a success. In a registration of kulak orphans between the age of 14 and 17 in 1938, we learn that in the Ust'-Chuzhan Raion one out of two children were Pioneers. In Novosibirsk fifteen out of twenty children were enrolled in the Pioneer organisation, and of the remaining five children two became Komsomol members; in Bokchar twenty-six out of thirty-six children were Pioneers; in Kruglov all thirty-one children were Pioneers, and the distribution in Grishkin was seventeen out of thirty children; In Vas'iugan thirteen out of seventeen were Pioneers, and four out of five had been enrolled in Aipolov. In Toin twenty-seven out of thirty-two were Pioneer, and the remaining were Komsomol members.[36]

**Table 3**: The recruitment of kulak Pioneers and Komsomol members in Western Siberian orphanages in 1938

| Orphanages | Pioneer members | Komsomol members | Pct. of political active kulak children |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ust'-Chuzhan | 1 of 2 | - | 50 |
| Novosibirsk | 15 of 20 | 2 of 20 | 85 |
| Bokchar | 26 of 36 | - | 72,2 |
| Kruglov | 31 of 31 | - | 100 |
| Grishkin | 17 of 35 | - | 48,6 |
| Vas'iugan | 13 of 17 | - | 76,5 |
| Aipolov | 4 of 5 | - | 80 |
| Toin | 27 of 32 | 5 of 32 | 100 |

(Source: GATO, F. R-591, op. 1, delo 98, ll. 168-171)

[35] See for example N.K. Krupskaya, "Выступления на совершании заведующих крайоно" (First published in the journal *Народное просвещение*, no. 3-4, 1929), here pp. 7-14 in N.K. Krupskaya *Педагогические сочинения в шести томах*, том четвертый (1929-1930), Moskva 1979.

[36] GATO, f. r-591, op. 1, delo 98, ll. 168-171.

Kulak children remained opposed to the Stalinist regime despite these enrolments, and on several occasions the authorities reported a number of disciplinary problems amongst Pioneers and Komsomol members.[37] In an investigation of the Bokchar orphanage from 4 to 9 September 1937 it was recorded that a number of problems related to the behaviour of kulak children had risen. On one occasion a Komsomol member was supposed to have said, while he and a number of other children stood under the picture of Stalin: "You are here friends, look and remember what he [Stalin] has done for your parents". In another incident, the inspection team found pictures of Stalin, Lenin, Marx, Engels and Zhdanov torn to pieces in the canteen, which was interpreted as a sign of resistance.[38] Similar incidents were recorded in all the other orphanages of Narym, and a report from the West Siberian Communist Party Committee on 16 December 1936 read: "Despite the enormous work conducted by the division of the working settlements of the department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (OTP UNKVD) in the orphanages of the West Siberian Krai (ZAPSIBkrai) [...] [the orphanages] are in a difficult situation".[39] One of the problems noticed was the "Weak condition of the work of Communist upbringing of children".[40] The following day, 17 December 1936, the Children's Commission of Western Siberia (*detkomissi po Zapsibkrai*) narrowed the problems to the following: disciplinary; teachers leaving the orphanages; the poor standard of school material; and bad sanitary conditions within most of the orphanages.[41] This supports the above assessment that kulak children were not passive to the oppressing regime, but instead reacted to their situation.

The disciplinary problem was never rectified, or at least still remained a concern at the end of the 1930s. A case from a Novosibirsk nursery school in 1937 illustrates this. An inspector overheard a child stating: "I do not need Stalin, I kiss the Tsar", but the child was not identified. Subsequently the inspector started an investigation in order to find the child. He gathered all the children in the canteen to have a serious talk about what he had heard and to make sure that the children understood how caring and loving Stalin and Lenin were. Afterwards, when the children were preparing their dinner, a boy came to the inspector and revealed that he had heard another boy saying: "I will take a revolver, go to Moscow and shoot Stalin". Another child confirmed this, and this time the inspector managed to identify the child. The responsible teacher of the nursery school was told of the incident by the inspector, and as she paid no attention to it, the matter was forwarded

[37] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1 delo 1452, l. 34.
[38] GANO, f. r-895, op. 2, delo 4, l. 11-13.
[39] GANO, f. r-895, op. 2, delo 4, l. 16.
[40] Ibid.
[41] GANO, f. r-895, op. 1, delo 184, l. 82.

to the local authorities. Because there had been several complaints about her the nursery school teacher was dismissed for negligence.[42] The remarkable aspect about this story is that adults working with children were constantly aware of what children said, and interpreted their statements with the greatest of care. If not, they would be condemned by other inspectors. Another report from 6 November 1938 details the situation of the Tutal' orphanage of Taigin raion, the Malo-Pichan orphanage of Maiin raion and the Tatar orphanage. This report again focused on inefficient political upbringing, and the director of the Tatar orphanage, the Communist Party activists, the Komsomol and the Pioneers were made responsible for this. Resistance towards the Stalinist regime and a basic inefficiency could, in other words, be detected at every level within the local structure, which underlines the extent of the problem.[43]

*5.1.4 The ambiguous manner of speaking*

In order to understand the nature of these problems we need to accept that Soviet documents are very often ambiguous; in other words, that certain statements may have had different implications. When, for example, the West Siberian Communist Party Committee on 16 December 1936 diagnosed resistance among orphan special settlers, it could also be understood as a way whereby the officials protected themselves from any criticism. Instead of focusing on their own part of the problem, meaning that they had not prevented these incidents from occurring or even rectified them, they could always explain the problems as being something that emerged from among the children themselves – it was, for example, never disputed as to whether the OTP UNKVD actually had done adequate work within the West Siberian orphanages.[44] The children were made the scapegoat, which diverted attention from the incompetence of the system away from the real problem – the repressive policies of the regime. This would also explain the nature of the problem addressed – namely that the regime considered itself to be without any responsibility, and that any inconsistency emerging would come from a stubborn population, or a population, that was "backward" and "ignorant" – holding back development.

Returning to the zeal of the regime, addressed before, from the point of the Soviet regime the projects were correct, as they offered society a key to a bright future. If the price for this was to deport unwanted peasants and their families in order to reorder and discipline society as such – and agriculture in particular – it was a price that had to be paid. Society was, as Stalin claimed in April

[42] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1602, ll. 68-69, 71.
[43] GATO, f. r-591, op. 1, delo 103, l. 1.
[44] GANO, f. r-895, op. 2, delo 4, l. 16.

1929, facing a turbulent period, and the leadership had to show willingness. In this atmosphere of ideological devotion the authorities rarely confronted the core of the problem – that is, that the repressive policy against their parents had led to this situation. When, for example, the authorities had problems with undisciplined kulak orphans it would never be discussed whether or not it had been wrong to dehumanise and deport their families – this was, after all, the main reason for children being homeless or orphans. Children could not be unaffected, either emotionally or physically, by the turmoil they had experienced. When they did react the regime would, apparently, respond as if it did not understand the cause. So, instead of reconsidering the policy fundamentally, it was argued that the "Communist upbringing" of the orphanages was weak and that it had to be strengthened – discipline would still be required despite the above problems.

Another aspect of this ambiguity was the nature of the resistance among the children directed against the Soviet regime. If we re-evaluate this "weak Communist upbringing" a more complex picture than the one being reproduced in the above reports may be detected. The tearing to pieces of the pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, as recorded in Bokchar orphanage in September 1937 is difficult to explain as anything but resistance. Yet the phrase, as made by one of the Komsomol member under a picture of Stalin, can be interpreted differently: "You are here friends, look and remember what he [Stalin] has done for your parents". Here the member was speaking to a certain audience – other kulak children. They understood the message in one way, yet they could at the same time argue that the inspection team had misunderstood it. When addressing other children, the message may very well have been negative – that whatever came from the regime was bad. On the other hand, it could also be argued that it was a positive expression: "...look and remember what he [Stalin] has done for your parents" can be interpreted as a way of emphasising that the kulak parents had been offered a more privileged way of living by being re-educated by the Soviet regime in Narym. "You are here..." suggests that the regime offered children a more correct education, upbringing and care taking in the orphanages.[45] Consequently, it is important to remember that when addressing a particular document on "inconsistency" and "disciplinary problems", its content expresses the view of the Soviet regime and not necessarily what actually happened.

[45] GANO, f. r-895, op. 2, delo 4, l. 11-13.

## 5.2 Propaganda and kulak children

### *5.2.1 Political manipulation*

The discussion, which we shall follow more closely, is whether the above difficulties necessarily proved the teaching of kulak children to be an ineffective exercise. Did the Soviet regime at any time abandon its initial encounter with the kulak families, because it realised the political education of the children was problematic? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to conduct a more thorough analysis of the language used in relation to kulak children. Peter Kenez has defined the Soviet regimes as a *Propaganda state*, in the sense that the leaders believed it possible to organise society through propaganda. It is given that V.I. Lenin found it necessary to implement the Bolshevik revolution through *propaganda*, *agitation* and *organisation* – society was to be organised through propaganda, which was agitated by specialists (activists of the communist party).[46] A form of communication would be through art, books, films, cartoons, radio programmes and other cultural productions. While the cultural landscape of the Soviet Union was fairly manifold during the 1920s, with a number of cultural fractions, unification occurred during the *First Congress of Soviet Writers* in 1934 – where the premises of "socialist realism" were defined. This unification was closely connected to the abovementioned victory of Stalin, during the Congress of Victors in 1934. "Socialist realism" introduced a more ideological rhetoric, and every development of society was understood within the framework of the evolution towards Communism – and especially the Stalinist version. Life was not to be reproduced as it was, but rather as it was supposed to be in a grand historical context.[47] One of the main inventors of "socialist realism" was Maksim Gorky, who also paid attention to the position of kulak children.

Gorky used his speech during the congress presenting the myth of Pavlik Morozov. Although Pavlik, in reality, was a son of a chairman of a rural Soviet in an isolated and not yet collectivised village, Gorky presented him as a kulak son and Pioneer, who felt repulsion towards his father's hiding of grain. Thus, Pavlik saw no other option but to turn his father in for treason.[48] In other words, he was the ultimate hero for whom the cause of the state and Communist Party was much more important than his family ties. This myth was strengthened when Pavlik and his brother Fedor were murdered in 1932 – who committed this murder is unclear, but his grandfather, grandmother

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[46] Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State. Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization 1917-1929*, Cambridge 1985.
[47] Philip Boobbyer, *The Stalin Era*, London 2000, p. 109.
[48] Iurii Druzhnikov, *Вознесение Павлика Морозова*, London 1988, pp. 30-55 and Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik. The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero*, London 2005, pp. xxii-xxiii.

and uncles were accused and the young Pavlik was turned into a Communist icon.[49] The interesting aspect is that Gorky, by presenting Pavlik as a hero, in theory also included kulak children in the construction of Soviet society: as long as they denounced the hostility to the state by their parents, these children could be defined as being friends of the revolution. The nature of such inclusion was discussed above, yet we should be aware that the Soviet regime believed that it was reaching out a hand to kulak children – even if such a hand implied renunciation of their family ties.[50]

Catriona Kelly has argued that even if Soviet propaganda aimed at children was initiated by Lenin's death in 1924, 1934 marked a change. It was here pictures of Stalin appeared more often in magazines for the Pioneers, and the relationship of the ruler and children began to become more significant, intimate and passionate in Soviet propaganda.[51] This was closely connected to the general situation of society, in which the celebration of heroism and personalities became even stronger from 1929 onwards.[52] Heroes were found in most sectors of society, as a contrast to the "enemy of the people". The best example of this is, of course, the Donbass miner, A.G. Stakhanov, who over-fulfilled his quota and consequently had a whole movement called after him – the Stakhanovite workers. He was celebrated in November 1935 during the Stakhanovite-congress in Moscow, which was also a celebration of Stalin, his henchmen and the Soviet system.[53]

The relationship between the Stalinist leadership and children took a very distinct direction in 1936 when the myth of "the happy childhood" was launched. This happiness should be understood in psychological rather than materialistic terms, since it was related to the awareness of the beauty of Communism. The children of the Soviet Union had a project to fight for, which officially was reflected by enormous gratitude to the Soviet leaders, who were dearly thanked for giving the Soviet children the opportunity of gaining an insight in this best way of living.[54] A very interesting element of this happiness theme originates from the small transpolar town of Igarka, where a significant newspaper editor arrived in 1935 – Lenin's former secretary Valentina Petrovna Ostroumova. She saw a possibility in encouraging children to write about their life, in this, the land

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[49] Fitzpatrick, 1994, pp. 255-56 and Kelly, 2005, p. 1 ff.

[50] See for example the conclusion in A.P. Finarov, "К вопросу о ликвидации кулачества как класса и судьбе бывших кулаков в СССР" 273-279 in *История Советского крестьянства и колхозного строительства в СССР*, Moscow 1963, pp. 277-278.

[51] Catriona Kelly "Uncle Stalin and Grandpa Lenin: Soviet Leader Cults for Little Children" pp. 102-122 in E.A. Rees et al. (ed.) *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorship*, London 2004, p. 106.

[52] E.A. Rees "Leader Cults: Varieties, Preconditions and Functions" pp. 3-26 in E.A. Rees et al. (ed.) *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorship*, London 2004, p. 106.

[53] *Первое всесоюзное совещание рабочих и рабониц СТАХАНОВЦЕВ*, Moscow 1935.

[54] A.K. Sokolov (pred.red.), *Общество и власть 1930-е годы. Повествование в документах*, Moscow 1998, p. 299 and Kelly, 2004, p. 108 and p. 111ff.

of frontiers.[55] Every day people could read stories about how wonderful it was to be a child in the furthest reaches of the Soviet Union. At one point some – it is not clear who (although A.M. Klimov takes the credit) – saw the possibility of publishing these short accounts. In 1938, they were published under the title *Мы из Игарки* (Us from Igarka). The book was a collection of letters by children in which they described their daily life: what it was like to be a child in Stalin's Soviet Union; to go to school; to join the Pioneer and Komsomol organisations; to organise cultural and political exhibitions, and games.[56] They lived on the frontier of culture and nature, or of civilisation and the Taiga and Tundra. It was not easy to get there; in fact one had to expect more than a week's travel from the European areas of the Soviet Union – most notably Moscow – by train, boat and by foot. Igarka was a typical frontier town, whose main enterprise was timber. It was a new town and all its inhabitants had moved there: either voluntarily – in order to seek wealth and prosperity – or as deportees during dekulakisation from 1930 to late 1932 – early 1933. The surroundings did not make life easy, but the book told of how everyone worked hard and how the children especially were aware of educating themselves, and thereby develop the cultural sphere of their hometown.[57]

Although *Мы из Игарки* (Us from Igarka) (1938) was forgotten for almost fifty years, it is an excellent example of how the ideal childhood was portrayed in the Soviet Union. To be a child did not mean complete innocence. The book was in many ways part of an overall manipulation in which the childhood of the post-revolutionary Soviet Union was seen as being endlessly happy.[58] Kulak children lived side by side with non-enemy children in Igarka, and were offered the same educational and living conditions.[59] Igarka was a case-study of how the Soviet regime defined children in general and kulak children in particular. By December 1935, or so the editor of *Мы из Игарки* relates to us in his preface, the children contacted Maksim Gorky in order to seek his literary assistance.

> Dear Aleksei Maksimovich,
>
> This letter is written to you by thousands of pioneers and school pupils from the transpolar town of Igarka...Now the sun is not shining at us. We only see the daylight for three hours. In the remaining hours it is Polar nighttimes –

[55] Mishenchinka and Toshchev, 2000, p. 8.
[56] A.M. Klimov (red.), *Мы из Игарки. Книга, написанная пионерами заполярья по замыслу и плану Алексея Марковича Горького*, Moscow 1938.
[57] Ibid., pp. 5-9 and pp. 12-14.
[58] Sokolov, 1998, p. 299.
[59] Mischenchinka and Toschchev, 2000, p. 11.

> often frost and snowstorm. Yet our life, Aleksei Maksimovich, is not dark and gloomy, but happy and good...We live a cultural and cheerful life...We – the pupil of the fifth school – live cheerful, intrepid and well with the whole town...All the conditions for a good, complete, cheerful and serious study of life has been given to us, children of the transpolar region, by the party, the Soviet power and our loving leader – Comrade Stalin...Thank you for this good life to Comrade Stalin, thank you Molotov, Voroshilov, Kalinin, thanks to the whole Communist Party and the Soviet state...
>
> (source: A.M. Klimov *Мы из Игарки. Книга, написанная пионерами заполярья по замыслу и плану Алексея Марковича Горького*, Moscow 1938, pp. 15-16)

Gorky responded to the letter from the Crimea on 15 December 1935 by stating:

> A hearty greeting to you, doctors, engineers, tank soldiers, poets, pilots, teachers, actors, inventor, geologists of the future!
> It was a nice letter you sent me. Its simple and clear words shine rich with your courage and your clear consciousness about the road to the highest goal of life, about the road to the goal, which your fathers and grandfathers have put in front of you, and in front of all working people of the world.
> (Klimov, 1938, p. 23)

The French writer, Roman Roland, was likewise contacted by the Igarka children. He chose a similar heroic tone in his reply:

> Here [in Switzerland] many are unemployed, and the children who finish school, do not know how to survive. And when their parents are unemployed, the children are very unhappy. But, maybe, we in the West will also discover the victory of Socialism!
> (Klimov 1938, p. 28.)

Soviet children, in other words, had something which children of the western capitalist world were denied: safety, prosperity and the correct ideology. There was naturally resistance from kulak children, especially towards this public portrayal of life in Igarka: on several occasions it was recorded that kulak children threw stones at pictures of Stalin. However, it was not the children who

were blamed, but instead their parents for conducting an upbringing that was class-hostile or, in other words, "the product of the class enemy".[60] The correspondences between Gorky, Roland and the Igarka children coincided with the moment Stalin issued his statement that "a son does not answer for his father". Thus, it appears convincing that Stalin's statement must have initially been motivated by this increasing ideologisation of Soviet childhood by 1934-36. The question is how the experiences of kulak children could be related to the above happiness found in the public rhetoric – after all, many of them lived in physical isolation as relatives of special settlers. The reasoning must have been that although there were difficulties in implementing the Communist project, society, and also kulak children, would in the longer-term benefit from the measures taken by the state. In the film *Lenin in 1918*, produced in 1939, Lenin and Stalin were depicted sitting on a bench with a small girl between them. While both were looking at the girl Stalin said; "Look, Vladimir Ilich [*pointing to the girl*], for whose sake we must be merciless to our enemies. She will not live like us, but better than us".[61] Such a notion reproduces the content of "socialist realism"; every event had to be understood within a broader historical context. Even if kulak children saw the darker side of the regime, they were, or so must the assumption have been, offered something from which they benefited in the longer term: the beautiful Communist project.

The happiness of Soviet childhood was constructed upon the basis of the loving leaders: Lenin represented the *dedushka* and Stalin the *diadia*.[62] This also applied to the discourse used in relation to orphan kulak children, which can be supported by a proclamation issued at seven different orphanages in Narym by 1940:

> The Communist Party and the Soviet government are especially concerned about the people's education. Vladimir Ilich Lenin has already said that the task of the young generation was to study, study, and study. Josef Vissarionovich Stalin, the leader of the working people, loving father and friend of the young uses every means to fulfil the testament of Lenin, so that the workforce of the USSR becomes educated ...
>
> (source: GATO, f. r-501, op. 1, delo 133, ll. 7, 11, 12, 15, 16)

The interesting aspect here is the use of the words "father" in relation to Stalin and "testament" in relation to the continuation of Lenin's educational policy. This is a rhetoric applied to a bourgeois family, where the generations played a significant role in reproducing a specific way of living.

[60] Ibid, pp. 10-11.
[61] The picture and text is reproduced in Boobyer, 2000, p 209.
[62] Kelly, 2004.,

Society as such was supposed to become the "large family" by the end of the 1930s, in which the leader of the state was akin to being a father and grandfather. This places the quotation of Gorky, who talked about fathers and grandfathers showing the way to the highest goal, in an interesting context. From the above it is possible to conclude that Stalin was the father and Lenin the grandfather. Kulak children, as with Soviet children in general, should in other words find the care taking not from their families and biological parents but rather from society, the state and, of course, Stalin and Lenin. In addition it is important to remember that kulak children were taught about their parent's hostility, whenever they were subjected to political myths such as Pavlik Morozov. These children were subjected to such rhetoric, whether they lived in the orphanages, went to school or to university, joined the Pioneers or Komsomol, or when they were enrolled in the army and at work. They may not have believed it, yet they were aware of the expectations of the regime on this issue. This also suggests that the intention of state remained more or less unaltered concerning this, despite difficulties in implementing the educational programme: kulak children were expected to detest their class-hostile parents.

### *5.2.2 The perception of Soviet propaganda*

The question is whether kulak children believed the propaganda, and if they ever accepted that their parents were class enemies. It is a difficult question, since certain actions may be motivated either by sincere belief, or by "survival strategy". After all, the alternatives to the Stalinist state were minimal – it is, for example, questionable as to whether a person actually could survive as a Blatnoi his or her whole life. With this in mind, Jochen Hellbeck has an interesting point in his analysis of the diary by a kulak son, Stepan Podlubnyi, which was written in the years from 1931 to 1939 – the very period being analysed. Hellbeck argues that this source clearly presents a picture of a son who detested his father. The father was "old fashioned" and "ridiculous", and only prevented the family and, of course, the son from gaining the necessary insight into the "truth" of the state. It was almost like liberation for the family when the father was dekulakised. Hellbeck concludes that the young Stepan, by writing his diary, was forming a certain Stalinist identity, which was heavily influenced by the rhetoric he encountered in school or in similar public places. Stepan believed in the stories he was told about Pavlik Morozov and others.[63] The argument can be supported by the memoirs of the Soviet émigré, Boris Weil, who remembers that: "The achievement of Pavlik Morozov, denouncing his father and thus becoming a Pioneer hero, worried me and my consciousness was troubled. I was

[63] Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931-1939)" pp. 344-373 in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, band 44 (1996), pp. 355-56.

tormented by division: on the one hand I ate the honey cakes [his father had brought home to the family from work in a cake factory], on the other hand I wanted to go to the militsia or the factory and report that my father pilfered".[64] Though he was not exhilarated about the situation, as Podlubnyi seems to have been, the effect of Soviet propaganda evidently made Boris Weil consider the action of his parents potentially wrong – that is against the interest of the Soviet state. This would imply that the Soviet regime awoke an emotional attitude in children, who had no recollection about what life had been before the October Revolution, and that this created certain scepticism between the generations.

There is, however, a problem with such an interpretation, as kulak children could hardly have acted differently. Even if Podlubnyi was writing his personal diary, he was raised in a society where the possibility of being denounced as a class enemy was ever-present. The aforementioned atmosphere of being aware about children's actions emphasised this. Podlubnyi knew that under such circumstances his diary could have been used as evidence against him, and he very well may have written it with this in mind. The question therefore is why Stephan Podlubnyi acclaimed the dekulakisation of his father? German scholars have striven to explain the phenomenon of public support of a non-democratic state by the concept of "Rausch", which refers to a certain emotional condition. The word is akin to "drunkenness" or "intoxication", which refers to a condition where rational logic has been temporary suspended.[65] It is important to emphasis that Rausch is not collective but entirely individual, and therefore the concept should serve to explain how individuals are willing to kill and vandalise in the name of an ideology, and support a dictatorial tyrant. The emotional intoxication of the population can, from this perspective, be used as an instrument in order to mobilise citizens for a common cause. The question is, of course, to what extent Rausch applies to the support by kulak children of the Stalinist regime. Were they mentally intoxicated by the propaganda they were subjected to during their upbringing in the orphanages and schools of the special settlements? One might argue that in the case of Stepan Podlubnyi, this idea could well apply. Given that he had been subjected to manipulation by the Soviet regime, it makes sense how a boy would be emotionally exhilarated and in a moment of Rausch believe that his own father was an "enemy" of the people.

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[64] Boris Weil, *Особо опасный*, London 1980, p. 21.

[65] Arpad v. Klimo and Malte Rolf, „Rasuch und Diktatur" pp. 877-895 in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51. Jahrgang 2003, Heft 10 and Matthias Braun, „Vremja Golovokruženija – Zeit des Scwindels. Der Alkoholische Rausch als Geste kulturellen Beharrens in der Sowjetunion der 1920er- und 1930er- Jahre" pp. 896-911 in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51. Jahrgang 2003, Heft 10.

The rational logic is, however, only temporarily suspended and subsequently does not entirely vanish in a moment of Rausch, and thus it is more problematic to explain the permanent impact of official rhetoric on Podlubnyi diary writing – it was, after all, written over a period of 8 years. This would give the impression of a more established psychological idea, which undermines the validity of Rausch. Mikhail Geller has argued that the Soviet power strove to create the new Soviet man ("Homo Sovieticus") by the means of ideologising. This is not the same as to argue that every act made by the Soviet Union was determined by a distinct ideology, in this case Communism, but rather that public rhetoric, to which kulak children also were subjected, was permeated by a very strong ideological discourse. In newspapers, films, cartoons, radio programmes, and books these children, as with Soviet children in general, were presented with a notion of a country in a constant danger: either from external or internal enemies. Terrorists, saboteurs, Trotskyites, kulaks and fascists all jeopardised the beautiful Communist project. The constant stories about how enemies had successfully undermined national security, which explained why it was necessary to use the harshest means in order to secure the survival of the Soviet state, created paranoia in Soviet society. This idea constructed a distinct psychological map among the citizens; people might not have believed every detail of what they heard in public propaganda, but they knew it was necessary to follow the public discourse in order to avoid discrimination and exclusion.[66] We can, as in relation to the education of kulak children, discuss the effect of such propaganda, but, to use Michel Foucault's theory on subjectivity, kulak children were subjected to the dominating discourse of Soviet society, which was extremely difficult to avoid.[67] We shall return to what such experiences did to kulak children, when as old people they recalled their lives in the special settlements.

### *5.2.3 Kulak children and class struggle*

This leads to a discussion about the definition of kulak children in the Soviet public discourse more thoroughly. Were they defined as "enemies" as their parents? Did such definition of the "enemy" change, and if so, how did it affect these children? In order to answer this question it must be remembered that these children would always be aware that the effort of becoming full-citizens implied a risk of being rejected by the Soviet functionaries – this became particularly clear, when we discussed the request of Elizabet Kirilovich Zykova from 1935. The content of Soviet education in the special settlements was to weaken the position of kulaks, and through political indoctrination

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[66] Mikhail Geller, *Машина и винтики*, London 1985.
[67] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and the Power" pp. 326-348 in James D. Faubion, *Michel Foucault. Power. The essential works 3*, London 1994.

to implement Soviet techniques and moral standards among kulak children. In other words, to undermine the economic basis of the traditional Russian peasantry (the family) and to construct a new socialist agriculture. The class terminology permeated the rhetoric of education at the beginning of the 1930s, and in several correspondences among Soviet officials of the People's Commissariat of Education (NKPros) it was discussed how such a struggle could be carried through also in relation to children.[68] Already by 1929 the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Komsomol decided to "... conduct a purge of social-alien elements from the *VUZy* [institutes of higher education]".[69] In a later Komsomol resolution from 1929, regarding "the ideological and political situation of Komsomol" it was further stressed that: "The increased class struggle around the socialist reconstruction of the country has in its development also the class front in the struggle for the young. The kulak in union with the landlords and under the assistance of former people (*byvshii liudi*) and kulak henchmen (*podkulachniki*) use all their strength, in order to get at least part of youth to follow them".[70] Such rhetoric suggests that kulak children and young people, and other similar descendents of class enemies must have been regarded with certain distrust, at least in the initial phase of dekulakisation. The age differentiation of kulak descendents has to be noted, since those older than 15 years, automatically were conceived as being "socially dangerous".[71] This would raise an uncertainty whether such class struggle, as advocated by the Komsomol in 1929, also affected the interrelations of children younger than 15 years old.

Lynne Viola argues that the official aim of the Soviet regime was not to exclude kulak children. Investigation of the educational policy does give an impression of inclusion – even if there were conditions. Theory is one thing, practices another and it quickly proved to be extremely difficult to realise the plan of providing kulak children with equal educational rights. The vivid phenomenon of denying kulak children access to the schools located outside of the special settlements has already been mentioned. Such treatment was a negative discrimination, as it placed kulak children in a worse situation than non-enemy children. Krupskaya described the dilemma of defining kulak children in an article from 1929:

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[68] GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1127, ll. 9-10.
[69] TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 2908, l. 60.
[70] Ibid., l. 117.
[71] Kokurin and Petrov, 2000 pp. 108-9.

> A young child's parents are arrested. He goes along the street crying...Everyone is sorry for him, but nobody can make up his mind to adopt him, or take him into the home: "After all, he is the son of a kulak...There might be unpleasant consequences."
>
> (Source: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization*, New York 1994, p. 219)

Such suspicion suggests that some would consider kulak children as class enemies, even if others would be more hesitant.[72] Many non-enemy teachers and other officials often discriminated against kulak children, and they would experience such procedures as being degrading: On 23 October 1934 the kulak son, V. Bushmanov wrote to Krupskaya explaining his situation in an orphanage in the Northern Russian town of Krasno-Vishersk. Along with a number of other kulak children Bukhmanov had lived in deportation in the special settlements and resettled in the children's home and was offered a basic education. He explained that he received food, and that the teachers generally treated them well. At one point, however, Bushmanov reveals a very interesting aspect: it was extremely difficult to get rid of the stigma "special settlers", even though they were children and not adolescents or even adult kulaks. He states, "Soviet functionaries still call us these special migrants wherever we go it is always special migrants, but we are hurt that we all attend school together, and we are called special migrants. What kind of special migrants are we when we have been re-educated in the new way we are going to defend the Soviet Union...?"[73] This letter suggests that people working with children found it difficult to distinguish between kulaks and their children, and that this uncertainty existed as late as 1934. Hence kulak children younger than 15 years old would experience discrimination.

### *5.2.4 Social discrimination*

In his elaboration on the construction of Soviet countryside, L. Kritsman discusses the social composition of school pupils. He was, if we recall, one of the spokespersons of the Marxist Agrarians and established that a capitalist farmer threatened the Russian peasantry by exploitation and grain speculation.[74] One of the indicators for such exploitation was, according to Kritsman, the overrepresentation of kulak children in local schools. He spoke of well-to-do (zazhitochnyi) rather

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[72] Fitzpatrick, 1994, p. 219.
[73] A.K. Sokolov (pred.red.), *Общество и власть 1930-е годы. Повествование в документах*, Moskva 1998, p. 335. Translated in Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stalinism as a Way of Life. A Narrative in Documents*, New Haven 2000, p. 403.
[74] L. Kritsman, *Классовое Расслоение в Советской деревне*, Moscow 1926, pp. 3ff.

than rich peasants (kulaki) indicating that even he had difficulties detecting the strata of self-perpetuating and exploitative kulaks within Soviet peasantry. Nonetheless, he asserts that 30% of all pupils were children of zazhitochnyi, even if they only comprised between 4 and 9% of the total number of peasant households by 1924. He also stresses that 41% of the pupils were children of poor peasants, which would indicate that their proportion was larger than that of zazhitochnyi. Yet poor peasants comprised 74% of all the households, indicating that the number of pupils was disproportional.[75]

**Table 4** Social composition of school pupils in 1924 according to L. Kritsman

| | Poor Peasants | Middle Peasants | Zazhitochnyi |
|---|---|---|---|
| % of households | 74 | 17(22) | 9(4) |
| % of pupils | 41 | 29 | 30 |

(source: L. Kritsman, *Классовое Расслоение в Советской деревне*, Moscow 1926, p.152)

There is a suggestion that key persons in the Soviet leadership were concerned by such disproportionate numbers in the mid-1920s. From 1925 to 1929 the school authorities in the cities experienced a decline in the proportion of working class children, implying that the expected allies of the regime were losing ground in the primary schools. The problem became even greater as this development was accompanied by a rise in the quantity of children with white collar background (among others, children of the intelligentsia). This dilemma was clearer when the statistics analysed the composition of older pupils. In 1926 working class children comprised 47.72% of the total number of Moscowian pupils in the 1st grade, whereas white collar children comprised 33.29%. The same distribution for 9th grade pupils was 18.61% of working children and 68.02% of white collar children. This suggests that white collar children tended to be more successful in the Soviet schools, and thus the Soviet authorities would depend on these children in development of a new Soviet intelligentsia, rather than the ones they preferred: that is the working class children. A similar development was recorded in the countryside from 1924 to 1926, where fewer poor peasants were admitted, while the proportion of children of middle and well-to-do peasants rose by almost 50%.

The highest department of socialist upbringing (Glavsotsvos) was aware by this development, and advocated for massive changes. One of the changes proposed was a discriminative policy directed against children of unwanted social groups, with socially unwanted children being excluded from

[75] Ibid., p. 152.

schools.[76] This was not a new occurrence in a Russian context: The Tsarist Minister of Education had as early as June 1887 launched a similar strike on children from an undesirable social background – that is, children of coachmen, cooks, washerwomen, small shopkeepers etc. This procedure was legalised by the time of the October Revolution, although it was aimed at the diametrically opposite classes: the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks stated that Soviet schools were to conduct "...comprehensive and free education of workers and the poorest peasants".[77] This implies that some Soviet school authorities traditionally legitimised the usage of discriminative measures in relation to school pupils and that it was only natural to use them at the end of the 1920s.

**Table 5** Social composition in the schools by grade in December 1926

| Grade | Working children | White collar children |
|---|---|---|
| 1st | 47.72% | 33.29% |
| 9th | 18.61% | 68.02% |

(Source: Larry E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse. Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, Bloomington 1991, pp. 98)

It is evident that when radicalisation occurred by 1929 it also had certain effect on the treatment of children in school. Lazar Kaganovich had in 1929 proposed extended method of grain procurement, where "compulsory quotas" were levied on individual peasant households, which was administrated by a village council – the *skhod*. This was one of many attempts to institutionalise the "Ural-Siberian method", whose primary aim was to marginalise kulaks, or those who opposed to this method, economically, socially and politically.[78] A number of measures were proposed, including the exclusion of children of designated kulaks from schools. This was approved by the Politburo on 20 March 1929, and restrictive measures in relation to school pupils were institutionalised.[79] It should be emphasised, that this was a culmination of a long and tense debate between the People's Commissariat of Education (NKPros) and Komsomol, which arose in 1928-29. At the Eighth Congress of Komsomol Organisation, held in May 1928, the League General Secretary, Chaplin, launched a massive assault on kulak children especially and children of NEP-men, who according to

[76] Holmes, 1991, pp. 98-99.
[77] Ibid., p. 97.
[78] For more on the Ural-Siberian Method see: James Hughes, "Capturing the Russian Peasantry: Stalinist Grain Procurement Policy and the Ural-Siberian Method" pp 76-103 *in Slavic Review* 53, no. 1 (spring 1994) pp. 76-77 and Yuzuru Taniuchi, "Decision-making on the Ural-Siberian Method" pp. 78-103 in Julian Cooper, Maureen Perried and E.A. Rees, *Soviet History 1917-53*, London 1995, p. 78-79.
[79] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, delo 417, l. 171.

him dominated schools. This was not only an attack on a specific category of children, but also on the leaders of the NKPros, who it seems had failed to prevent this undesired development. Thus Chaplin asserted: "We must send our best workers to the Narkompros apparat to shake it up for new work".[80] "New work" in this context obviously meant a more aggressive educational policy used to prevent the dominance of socially unwanted elements the schools. It also implied discrimination against kulak children and other children from similar socially unwanted background. Krupskaya, representing the NKPros hesitated, arguing that "[Purging was a] bureaucratic approach towards children that resurrects the Middle Ages" and further: "There is class struggle and then there is class struggle [to deny children access to schools] is not class struggle".[81] Other institutions, such as the People's Commissariat of Justice and the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs both supported the Komsomol on this issue. Both commissariats assumed that a social class was self-perpetuating, implying that children belonged to the class into which they were born. Consequently, the leaders of the commissariats assumed that the biological heritage was of great significance in the formation of the kulak children's consciousness. It was therefore asserted that kulak children at least were potentially dangerous, and accordingly could be subject to a restrictive class struggle – for example, by being excluded from the classrooms.[82]

Such a notion can also be detected in a report "On some irregularities on the cultural front" issued by the Central Committee of the Ukraine Communist Party (CK KP(b)U) in 1929. The "irregularity" was the social composition of students entering higher education (*profshkola* and VUSy), in which children of zazhitochnyi and kulaks apparently comprised a larger proportion than children of workers:

1) The number of students at different institutes and polytechnics is 21 of which:
   - Children of kulaks and zazhitochnye 11 pupils (52.3%)
   - Children of middle peasants 7 pupils (33.4%)
   - Children of poor peasants 3 pupils (14.8%)
2) The number of students at the *profshkola* is 18 of which
   - Children of kulaks and zazhitochnye 8 pupils (44.4%)
   - Children of middle peasants 3 pupils (16.7%)
   - Children of poor peasants 7 pupils (38.4%)

[80] Holmes, 1991, p. 111.
[81] Ibid., p. 113.
[82] Carolli, 2004, pp. 140-156.

(source: TsDAGO, F. 1, op. 20, delo 3019, l. 67)

Calling the social composition an "irregularity" would indicate that the leading organs of the Ukrainian Communist Party were concerned about the situation. The further elaboration in the report, regarding the situation of the elementary schools in Vol'shan raion adds yet another element to this "irregularity". It was stated that "Children's organisations, existing at every school, work actively, yet their activity is directed against the Soviet state...hostile elements, who use children for carrying out counter-revolutionary work, use the weak leadership of the Pioneer organisation with the LKSM (Komsomol) ...the young, in as well as outside the school read old counter-revolutionary literature".[83] Such developments had to be corrected, which also indicates a strengthening of the Pioneer and Komsomol among children and the young. Another aspect of the weakening of kulak children in the schools is revealed in a West Siberian directive issued on 15 November 1930.

No. 5002

The question of assisting children of poor peasants (*bednoty*) in the school organisations was discussed and the following decisions accepted:

1. Reorganising the links within the group in a way that to the remaining children of *bednoty* a stronger participation was attached, what also was implemented.
2. Acknowledge the necessity of separating the remaining children of *bednoty* in individual circles, although not in every school, this decision is implemented in case of absence of a vacant room. Where the lessons take place unpaid teachers teach them as a part of their social obligation (общественная работа).

(source: GANO, f. r-61, op. 1, delo 1127, l. 21)

This directive implies that the logic of dividing society into friends and enemies, which, as argued earlier, constituted the main basis of the class struggle, also existed within the vocabulary of education and upbringing of children younger than 15 years old. The children of poor peasants were to be granted more attention than other groups in order to strengthen their social position. This would also indicate that kulak children and children of middle peasants were to be, if not marginalized, then at least weakened socially. This is, of course, not mentioned explicitly, but was the logical consequence of such a separation of children. It would therefore imply that teaching was

[83] TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 3019, l. 67.

permeated by rhetoric of strengthening some – the children of *bednoty* – and at the same time weakening others – the kulak children. That teachers had to work without any kind of payment underlines the importance of such a plan – it was their social obligation, and therefore in the interest of society. The aim of education was, in other words, that some children (children of workers and poor peasants) should be subjected to positive discrimination, while others (children of the intelligentsia and kulaks) were to be met with negative discrimination.

The fate of kulak children and their access to state schools was also developed in an undated resolution from the secretariat of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party in 1930. The resolution discussed the situation of kulak children in the primary, middle and higher schools, and it was asserted that:

> Primary School
>
> ...
>
> 5. Children of kulaks are not excluded from [primary] schools, with the exception of, what concerns kulak and hostile influence against the rest of the children...strengthen the work in the schools among children of *bednoty*
>
> ...
>
> Pioneer organisation
>
> 1. Children of kulaks are not accepted in the Pioneer organisation
>
> ...
>
> Middle and professional schools
>
> ...
>
> 2. Exclusion from middle and professional schools of socially dangerous elements...
>
> (Source: TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, delo 3088 ll. 8-10 – Translation from Ukrainian, underlining and italicising is done by the author (MK))

This supports the impression that there were some within the highest level of the Soviet command structure – in this particular case among the highest officials of the Ukrainian Communist Party – who supported the idea of separating at least part of the kulak descendents from other children. When, for example, the primary school was discussed in this document kulak children would be divided into those who were regarded as being harmless and those who were being influenced by a class-hostile behaviour. Whether such a distinction was related to the categorisation of their fathers

is not explicit in the document. However, it seems reasonable to believe that those related to first and second category kulaks were expected to possess at least elements of a class hostile attitude. This would also indicate that children of the third category were more likely to be integrated in the classrooms in particular and society in general. If this is the case, it can still be recorded that none of the kulak offspring, whether they were related to first, second or third category kulaks, could be admitted into middle or professional schools. In their sociological investigation on Soviet émigrés from the 1950s, Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer recorded that of the total numbers of dekulakised at least 56% explained that their social background prohibited them from gaining sufficient education. In comparison only 27% of the non-dekulakised reported a similar problem, indicating that the social background was significant when the Soviet regime approached pupils.[84]

Hence a "social cleansing" of the school system, supported at the very highest level of the Soviet command structure, occurred by 1929-30. This supports the impression that a discrimination against kulak children in the school system was supported by Stalin and his henchmen at this phase, which is significant for an understanding of how this particular category of children is defined. A shift seems to have happened by 1934-35, allowing kulak children to have their civic rights restituted and gave some a possibility of progressing in Soviet society. Yet the treatment of kulak children should also be understood against the background of the previous four years of repression and contradictions. If the official statistic holds for 1929-30 it should have been expected that a very high proportion of well educated by 1934-35 were kulak children. Since this is not the case it can be asserted that the discrimination of kulak children by 1929-30 had been so devastating that it not only minimised their proportion in the higher educational institutions, but also weakened their position in Soviet society on a greater scale. A rapprochement to kulak children may have occurred, but it was not enough to rectify the damages of the previous years of dekulakisation.

## 5.3 The perfect stranger

The Russian historian T.M. Smirnova has discussed the position of children of special settlers and finds that they – whether they lived in the settlements or returned to society – were termed as "social strangers". Living in isolation from society had marked them physically as well as mentally,

[84] Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Baur, *The Soviet Citizen. Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961, p. 29.

and when returning they would always in reality be greeted by distrust.[85] Fitzpatrick stresses that even if dekulakisation formally ended by 1932, the mass kulak scare remained a fact throughout the decade. This obviously affected the conditions of kulak decedents, who would always be uncertain about the future. In the public mass culture, it became a commonly accepted fact that the "hidden hand" of the kulak had survived, despite the restrictive dekulakisation policy by the beginning of the 1930s. This was clearly expressed in films like *The Party Book* from 1936, where it was explicitly stated that the kulaks had infiltrated society, and were hiding themselves until they were strong enough to act. The consequence of such mass hysteria was that any one having kulak ties would be latent victims in a period of radicalisation, because ordinary citizens as well as functionaries at any level of the Soviet power structure would in reality find it difficult to distinguish between enemy parents and enemy children.[86]

The Soviet leadership conducted a liquidation policy towards kulaks, which was formulated by January 1930, but was it also intended to discriminate kulak children? It is evident that children were deported to the furthest reaches of the Soviet Union as a consequence of the dekulakisation policy.[87] It might very well be, as Fitzpatrick asserts, that kulak children were never formally excluded from the *kolkhozy*, as were their fathers,[88] and it may also be, as Viola stressed, that they were offered education with the aim of including them into society. They were, however, *de facto* victims, in the sense that children related to first and second category kulaks were deported as a result of the restrictive policies of the Soviet regime. This became even more apparent by July 1937, when the anti-kulak campaigns escalated once more. Even if kulak children younger than 15 years old were not formally termed "socially dangerous", they were, nonetheless, forcibly removed from their families and placed in orphanages and special settlements where the living conditions were characterised by mortality, famine and physical exhaustion.[89] An explanation to this must be that the regime in the initial phase was focusing on weakening the fathers of the household. Everything was designed in order to destroy the father, as he was the enemy of the people. When problems

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[85] T.M. Smirnova, "«В происхождении своем никто не повинен...»? Проблемы интиграции детей «социально чудежных элементов» в послереволюционное российское общество (1917-1936 гг.)" pp. 28-42 i *Отечественная История*, July/August 2003, Number 4 pp. 38ff.

[86] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class. The construction of social identity in Soviet Russia", pp. 20-46 in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism. New Directions. Rewriting Histories*, London 2000, p. 31.

[87] "О мероприятиях по ликвидации кулаческих хозяйств в районах сплошной коллективизации" pp. 126-130 in V.P. Danilov et al. (red.), *Трагедия Советской Деревни, том 2, Ноябрь 1929 - Декабрь 1930*, Moskva 2000, pp. 126-127.

[88] Fitzpatrick, 1994, pp. 364-65 (note 20).

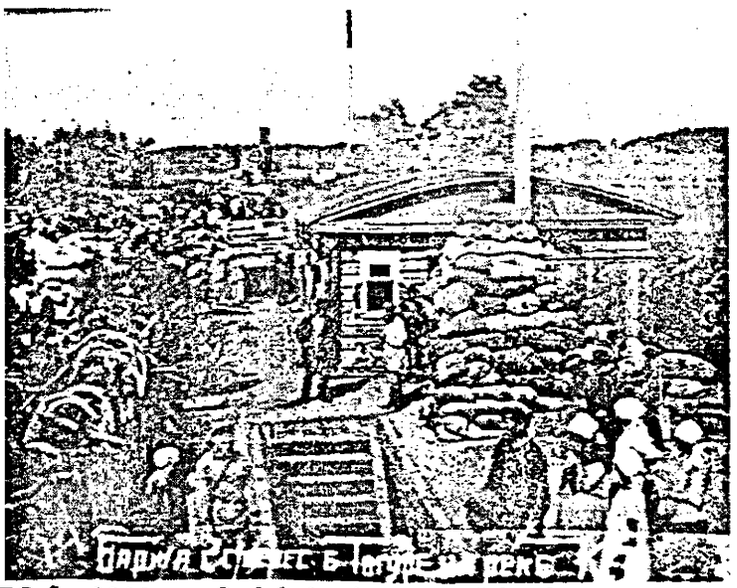
[89] Regarding the escalation of the anti-kulak campaign in 1937 and the fate of children, see: Оперативный приказ народного комиссара внутриних дел Союза С.С.Р № 00447 «об операции по репрессированию бывших кулаков, уголовников и др. антисоветских элементов», Moskva 30 June 1937, l. 8.

emerged in relation to kulak children, it was termed as an outcome of "disciplinary problems", and never that the deportations of their parents were a mistake. Therefore, the kulak children constituted a serious dilemma during the dekulakisation: in theory they should be included, given that they belonged to the generation of the "happy childhood". However, they were in reality victimised by the repression directed against their parents. This was the main paradox of their education.

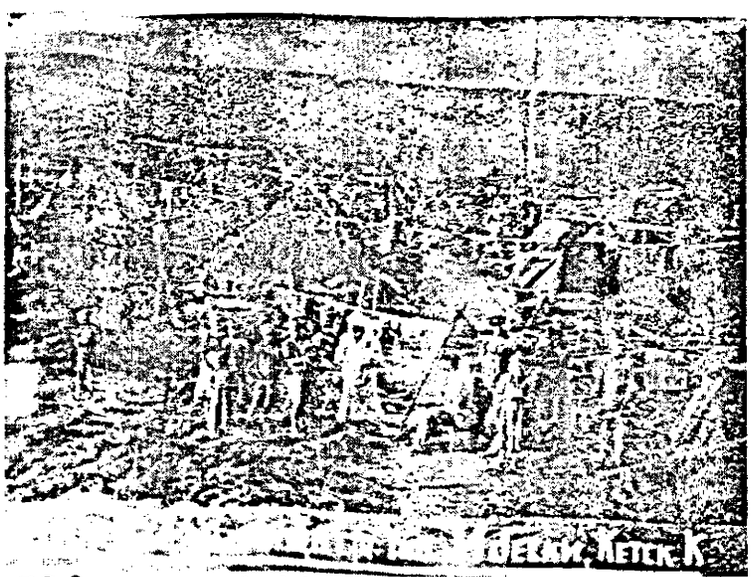
Zygmunt Bauman notes that society comprises three main categories of people: "friends", "enemies" and "strangers". While the two first categories are easier to define, the last is more difficult: the stranger is both/and and neither/nor. He or she is both friend and enemy, in the sense that they consist elements of both, but neither enemy nor friend, since they do not belong to the world order.[90] Although it might be argued that Bauman has a simplistic and even pessimistic understanding, and that his reflection is based on national and ethnic "friends", "enemies" and "strangers", his distinctions are nonetheless relevant. The Soviet regime had social enemies (in this case, kulaks) which were random categories, and at the same time constructed social friends, or allies of the proletariat – like poor peasants or rural labourers, who supposedly assisted the regime implementing the dekulakisation. In this context kulak children turned out to be, as Smirnova stated, the "social stranger", who the Stalinist regime found more difficult to define: they were not enemies, but neither were they friends. It would be possible to include them in society as a friend if they followed the required education and engaged in productive work, that is if they did not continue the work of their parents. Yet, on the other hand the system would be permeated by a distinct notion of distrust towards them, since these children still remained potentially "socially dangerous". They had experienced the darker side of society – repression, discrimination and dehumanisation – and would therefore be expected to possess anti-Soviet sympathies.[91] If Soviet children in general were, as in the case of the transpolar Soviet town of Igarka, the children of the frontline – the doctors, engineers, tank soldiers, poets, pilots, teachers, actors, inventors and geologists of the future as Gorky called them – kulak children would consequently be the strangers of the frontiers.

[90] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivilance*, Cambridge 1991, p. 2 and pp. 53-59.
[91] Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class...", 2000, p. 31.

Courtesy of Memorial in Tomsk. Pictures belongs to the collection of "Memory on repression of collectivisation" in GATO

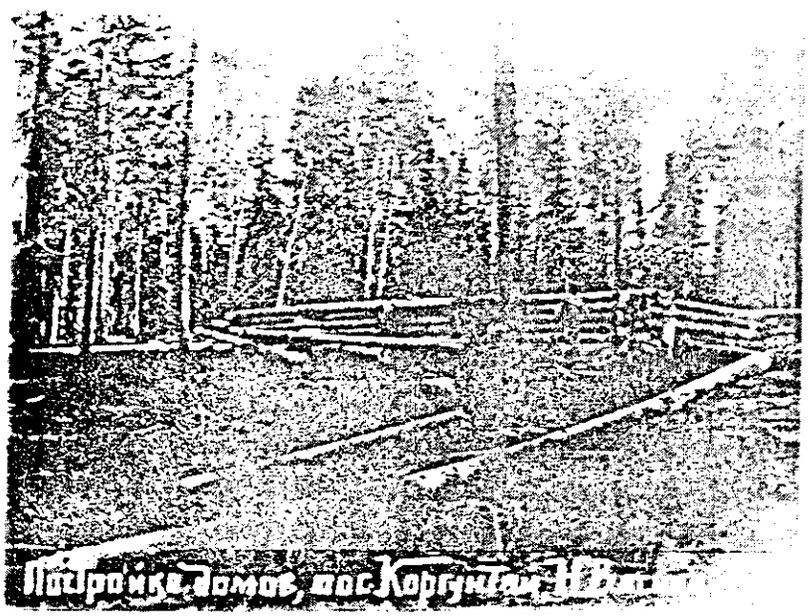


(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 32. Riverboat and deportees)

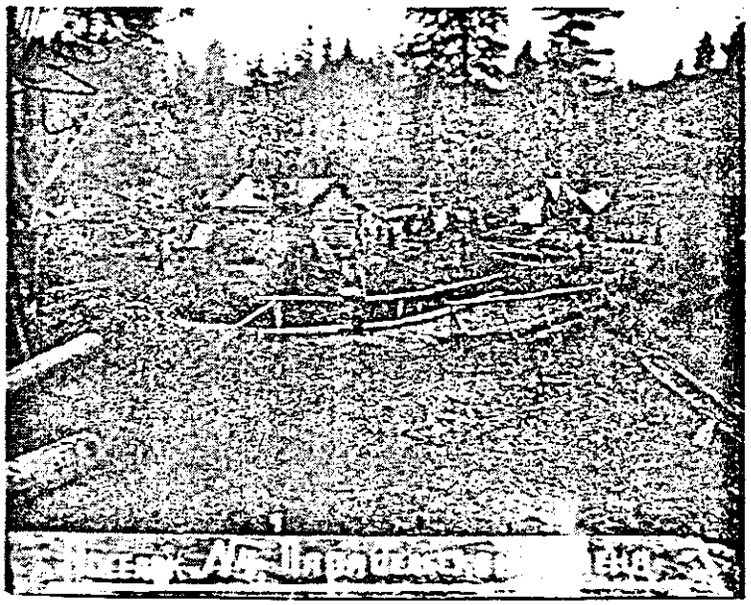


(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 33. Temporary settlement)

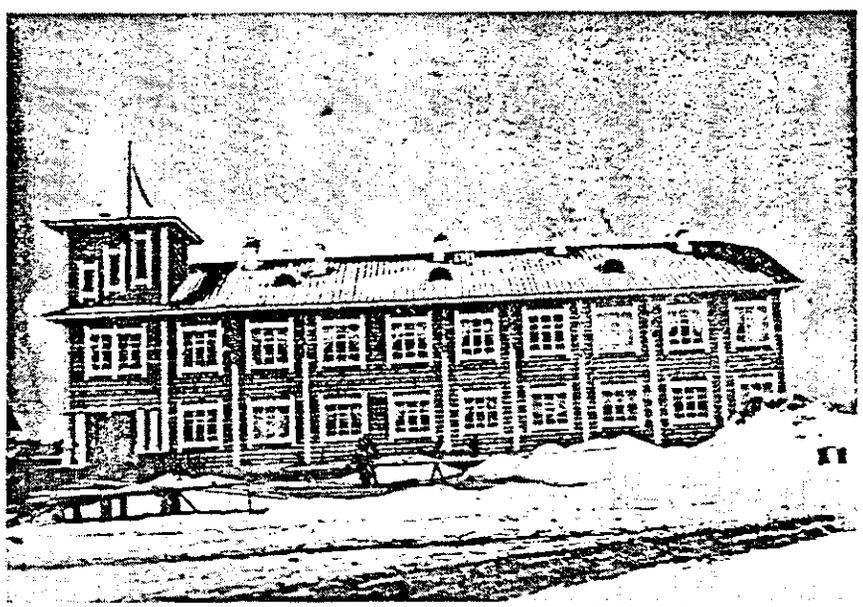
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 1. Construction of permenant settlement)



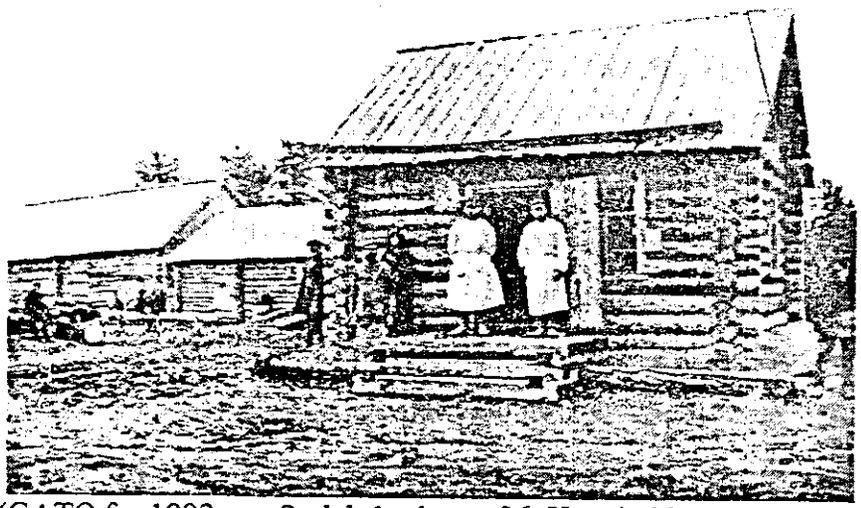
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 11. Construction of permanent settlement)



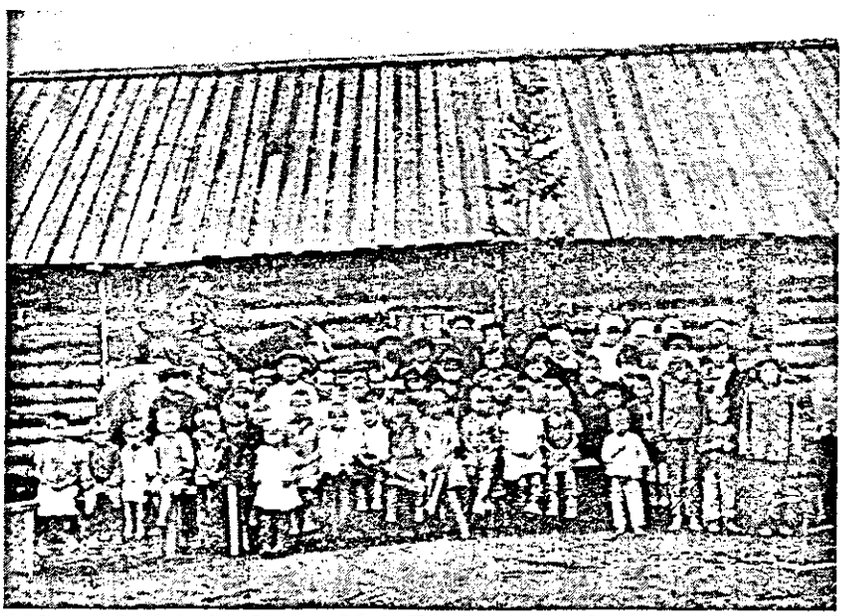
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 13. Permanent settlement)



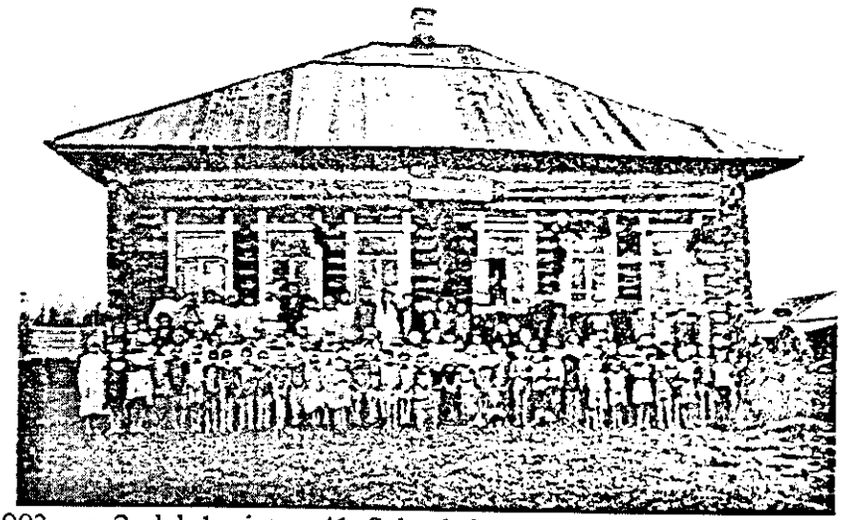
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 34. Office building for a *kommendatura*)



(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 26. Hospital in a settlement)

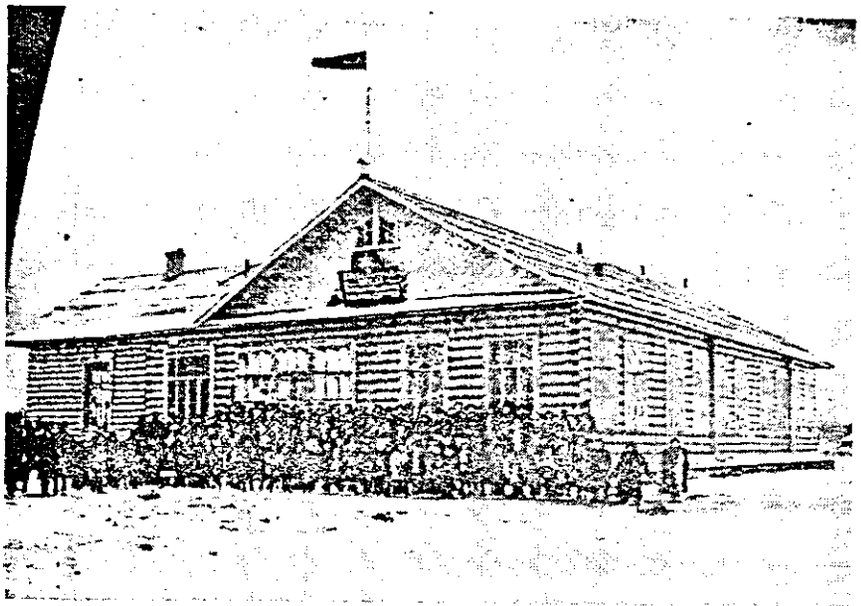


(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 25-1. The commandant and children of a settlement)

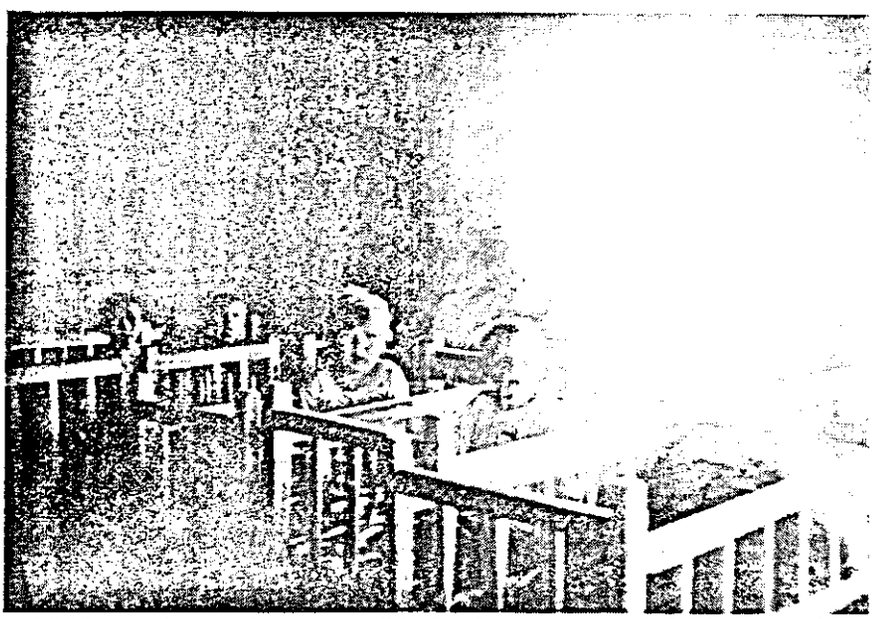


(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 41. School class – notice the dressing of the children and compare it to that of the commandant and teacher (at the far right))

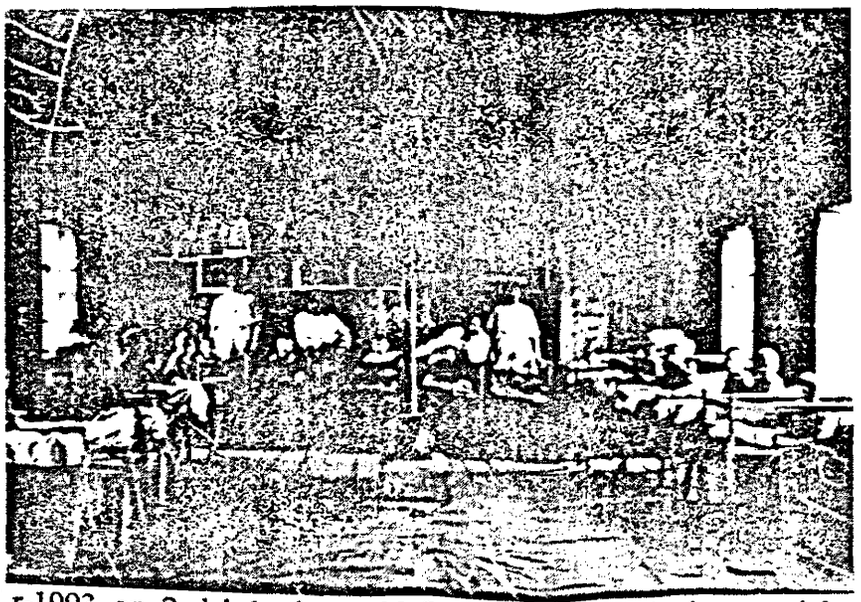
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 22. School class)



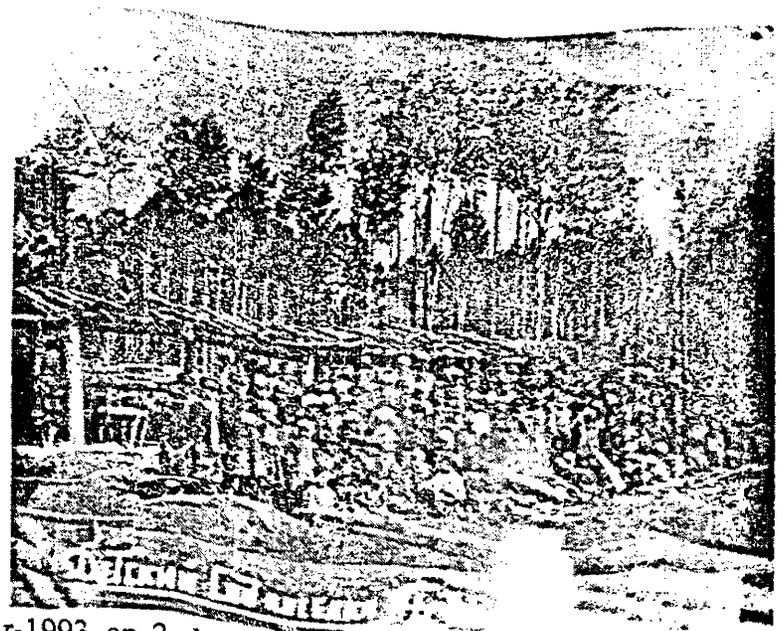
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, Picture 42. OGPU orphanage)



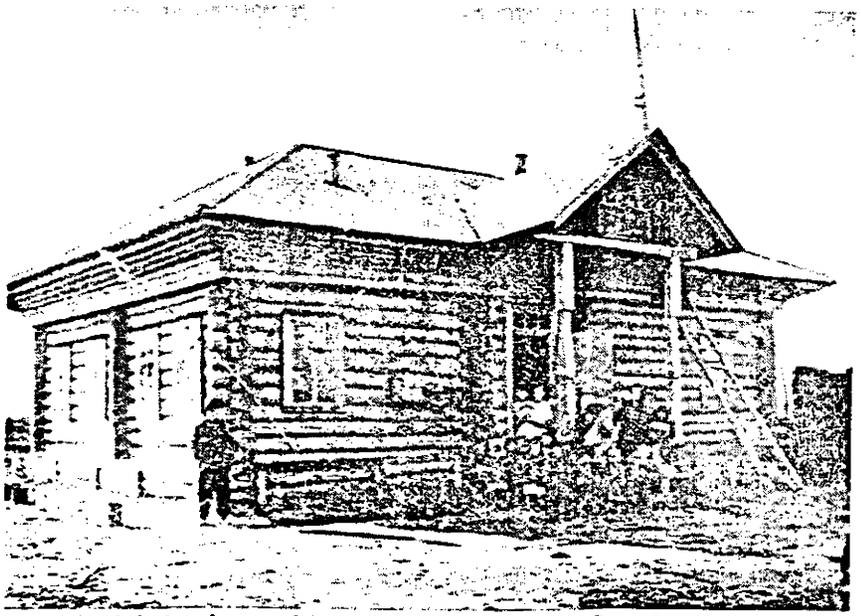
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 20. Orphanage or crèche in a special settlement)



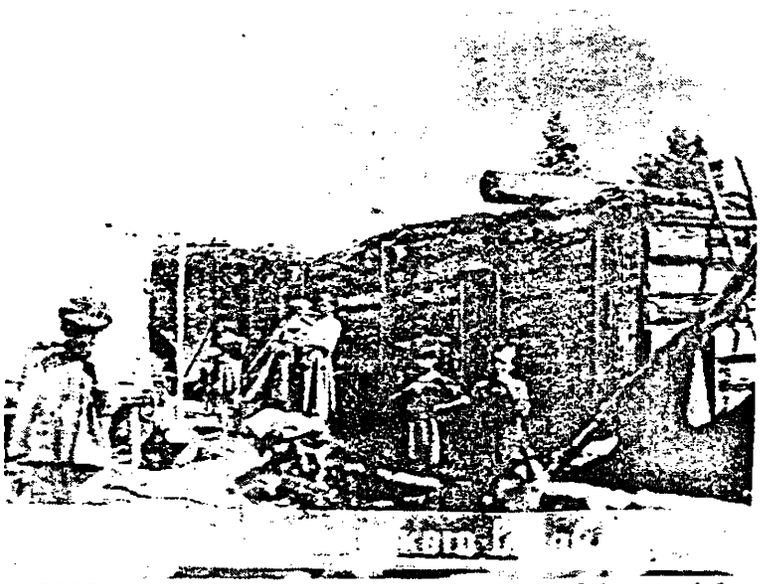
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 39.Orphanage or crèche in a special settlement)



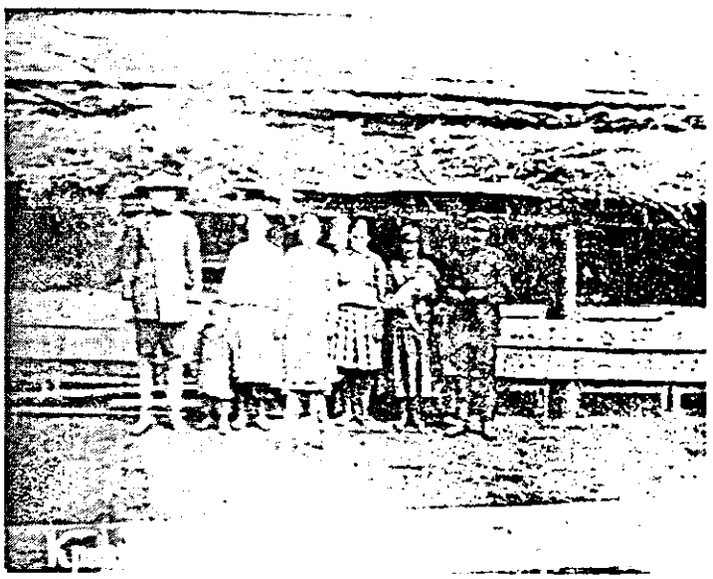
(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 40. Nursery school in a special settlement)



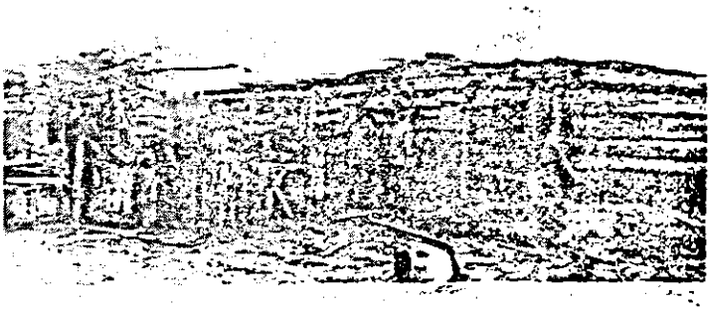
(GATO f. r-1993, op.2, del. 1, picture 23. Official institution for placement of children – probably an orphanage)



(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 17. A family of the special settlement)



(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 2. A special settler's family)



(GATO f. r-1993, op. 2, del. 1, picture 36. Barracks in a special settlement)

# 6. Memory and forced rejection in the Soviet Experience

One evening in 1929 a young Soviet boy was woken by a noise in the family living room. His father, a factory owner, had been gone for some days, so he believed it was him returning. He jumped out of the bed, and ran into the living room, but was met by strangers: who were they? Were they thieves? Why had they come? What did they want? And where was his father? His father had been arrested and the "intruders" were Soviet officials confiscating his property. When they noticed the boy, the officials started to make remarks such as: "should we list him as well?" At one point one of the officials grabbed the boy's arm, and led him out of the house. The boy began to cry, as he could not understand what was happening or where he was going. The destination was an orphanage, in which the official, who had grabbed the boy, led him into a room. When leaving him the official said: "Wait here, kid, and stop crying [...] Nobody needs your tears. I'll tell them about you. I am sick of these degenerates [...] As for the past, the sooner you forget it, the better for you".[1]

One of the aims of forced collectivisation and dekulakisation was, as shown earlier, to educate "kulak" children in order to separate them from their parents and grandparents – that is their heritage, their past. The ambition was to make them forget the traditions of the peasant family and replace it with political indoctrination. But could the past really be forgotten? Was it possible for the children to denounce their parents and grandparents and look towards the regime? Here we analyse how forced collectivisation and dekulakisation affected the kulak children. By following the children into old age it can be revealed how they remember their experiences in the Soviet state.

## 6.1. Memorising

Before addressing the narratives of kulak children intentions should be made clear, when personal testimony is used as a source. In light of the massive restructuring of Europe at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, in which old regimes, such as the Soviet Union, collapsed and new state arose, the concept of memory was re-emphasised among the populations of the former eastern and central European states.[2] In the Russian context, the establishment of the Oral History Club in Moscow and the national "Memorial" foundation could especially demonstrate this awareness. The main purpose of the latter was to record and document the darker legacies of Stalinism by collecting

[1] This story is told in: Nicholas Vionov, *Outlaw. The Autobiography of a Soviet Waif*, London 1955, pp. 8-9.
[2] Luisa Passerini"Introduction" pp. 1-20 in Luisa Passerini (ed.) *Memory and Totalitarianism*, Oxford 1992, p. 3.

written memoirs of victims, interviews, photographs and pictures.[3] Much of the written material for the present chapter and the pictures of the thesis originate from this work.[4] This public recollection of the Stalinist past originated from voluntary and individual initiatives and was rarely supported by the Russian state.[5] The collective memory of Russia and other Post-Soviet societies is, as Catherine Marridale argues, excluding, meaning that whereas a very strong emphasis it put on the Second World War (or the Great Patriotic War), the public remembrance of the dekulakisation and other examples of political terror against Soviet society is very limited. There are, for example, no public commemoration sites recollecting the suffering of kulak children in either of the former Soviet states.[6]

Memory, as used in the present chapter refers to "individual remembrance", as individuals and not society remembers the past.[7] Personal memory is verbalised either orally or written. Interviews and written memoirs are different kinds of sources; while written memory is finished when the last full stop is placed and the text becomes public, oral testimony is much more fragile, fragmented and changeable: the person opens up in different ways to the surrounding world. In work done on Holocaust survivors it has been shown how the same memory varies between the oral and written edition – the semantic, rhythm and continuity are different.[8] In the oral testimony, we witness the memory process much more than in the written, as people being asked to deliver their life story tend to remember more and more as they speak about their life. If they were confronted right away with a tape recorder and expected to talk freely, the outcome may often be different. While written testimony can be corrected and rewritten, oral memory has to be delivered on the spot. It is important to let the narrator become used to the situation, and forget about the interviewer and any audio-visual aids. The former kulak daughter Maria Vikentevna, who was the first to be interviewed by this author (16 August 2003), was visibly uncomfortable by the set-up. The tape recorder, the questions, and the uncertainty about the expectation of the interviewer made her nervous and only at the end of the interview did she talk in a more relaxed way. On the tape, it is very obvious when this shift happens in her narratives. Before the shift she stumbles over the words, breathes

[3] Daria Khubova, Andrei Ivankiev and Tonia Sharova, "After Glasnost. Oral History in the Soviet Union" pp. 89-101 in Luisa Passerini (ed.) *Memory and Totalitarianism*, Oxford 1992 p. 90.
[4] All material referred to as: GATO f. r-1993, op. 1 are these written memoirs.
[5] The president Vladimir Putin for example stated as late as May 2005 that the collapse of the Soviet Union was one of the great losses of the late 20th century.
[6] Catherine Marridale "War, death, and remembrance in Soviet Russia" pp. 61-83 in in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge 2000, p. 62
[7] Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, "Setting the framework"pp. 6-39 in Winter and Sivan, 2000, p. 16.
[8] Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies. The Ruin of memory*, New Haven, pp. 17-18. Barbara T. has both published her memories of Auschwitz and has participated in a videotaped oral testimony session. At one stage during her interview, she reads from her written memory and Lawrence Langer explicates the differences.

apprehensively, asserts that she only remembers little from her childhood, and asks the interviewer whether what she says is relevant or not; afterwards, however, her speech begins to flow and she starts to recall more details from her life as a deported enemy child. After the formal session ended, she remembered crucial details about, for example, homeless children in the special settlements which were not recorded on the tape recorder. In fact, much valuable information for this particular investigation came after the tape recorder was removed from the scene, either because people remembered more, or because they found the situation less stressful. Due to this and similar circumstances, it has often been recommended to break an interview into different sessions, if possible undertaken on different days, in order to give the narrator time, and to make him or her more relaxed about the situation. This is akin to the rewriting of written memory, as the narrator gets time to rethink the testimony given earlier.[9]

When the interview is conducted, it has to be adapted it into the overall body of sources, and here again challenges arise. The traditional impression of oral history from the 1950s to the 1980s has been that there is a simple relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee: in other words, that the inter-subjectivity is uncomplicated, and when the interview is given it can easily be transcribed and published. This assumption is supported by the editors of the Russian memory collection *Дети Эмиграции. Воспоминия* (Children of the Emigrants. Memory) (Moscow 2001), where the very first line in the introduction reads: "Every human being eagerly wants to talk about their own childhood, since their personal worldview is formed in these first years, and in many cases decides the outcome of their long term fate".[10] However, in work done on the Balkans it has been suggested that this is far from being the case – inter-subjectivity is much more complicated and often influenced by a high amount of non-remembering, or denial.[11] The state of denial works on different levels: both among victims, bystanders and perpetrators. Denial is in this sense a matter of seeing, but not being able to comprehend what actually happened. This can either work on a conscious or a subconscious level – that is we actively decide to close our eyes to what happens, or we simply repress our experiences, as they are traumatic, from the conscious level of our mind.[12]

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[9] For more on the methods of collecting interviews see for example: Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, with Olivia Bennett and Nigel Cross "Ways of listening" pp. 114-125 in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, London 1998, p. 116.

[10] V.V. Zen'kovskii, *Дети Эмиграции. Воспоминия*, Moscow 2001 p. 5.

[11] Luisa Passerini, "Epilogue" pp. 219-226 in Natale Losi, Luisa Passrini and Silvia Salvatici (eds.). *Archives of Memory: Supporting Traumatized Communities through Narration and Remembrance. Psychosocial Notebook*, Vol. 2, October 2001, p. 220.

[12] Stanley Cohen, *State of Denial. Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering*, Cambridge 2001.

In the Soviet Union there was a public culture of denial permeating the official ideology, where the tragedies of the 1920s and 1930s – such as the forced collectivisation of agriculture – were ascribed as historical necessities in the process of modernising a backward country. Euphemisms were used when the discrimination of the possessing peasants, being stigmatised as "kulaks", and their families were analysed in Soviet historiography. Aside from Khrushchev's denouncement of Stalin in 1956, which was not a denouncement of forced collectivisation and dekulakisation, but only of the unjust arrest and execution of high level cadres within the Communist Party. The social experiments of the 1920s and 1930s were generally understood as being positive transformations of society. It was not until the Gorbachev era, when criticism of Stalinism became increasingly legitimate, that the focus was placed on the human conditions during these years.[13]

In the context of public denial it was difficult, if not impossible, for the Soviet population to verbalise the darker legacies of the past; ordinary people would simply be afraid of the consequences associated with remembering.[14] And, they were inclined to forget the past, as the Communist project was a process going forwards not backwards.[15] This silence was witnessed during an oral history project undertaken in the city of Vladimir, 300 kilometres east of Moscow, in 1984. The Oral History Club had the aim of hearing the local population talk about the local prison, which was known for the high proportion of political prisoners. At this stage *perestroika* and *glasnost* had not yet begun, and nobody dared to say anything. It was as if the prison – which was located right opposite the railway station – did not exist. In 1988, when Gorbachev's reforms had been in process for two years, the oral historians returned to Vladimir. And, now on daily basis newspapers published articles about Stalinist repression and television and radio had several critical broadcasts. At this stage, the local population suddenly knew everything about the prison, and it was as if it had only just been constructed, although it had been there for decades.[16] The populations of post-Soviet societies were heavily influenced by the idea of public denial, which Olga Litvinenko experienced in her oral history project in the Urals. In 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, she collected the life stories of former kulak children. All participants, however, demanded that their surnames remained anonymous, as they were afraid that someone would recognise them.[17] An example of how the insecurity exists, even today, can be seen in the interviews conducted during

[13] D. Paillard «Russie/URSS: le discours national russe comme memoire et refus. Memoire, histoire, langage » pp. 98-108 in *Langages*, Paris 1994, Volume 28, Number 114.
[14] Khubova, Ivankiev and Sharova, 1992, p. 100.
[15] Zygmunt Bauman, "The Party in the System-Management Phase: Changes and Continuity" pp. 81-108 in Andrew C. Janos, *Authoritarian Politics in Communist Europe. Uniformity and Diversity in One-Party States*, Berkley 1976 p. 88
[16] Khubova, Ivankiev and Sharova, 1992, pp. 95-96.
[17] Litvinenko, 1998, p. vii.

the summer of 2003 in Novosibirsk by the present author. The kulak daughter Tatiana Ivanovna at one stage during her interview noticed the tape recorder and asked (in a critical way), if the interview was being recorded. When confirmed by the interviewer, she immediately responded – "perhaps I shouldn't continue then". She was persuaded to do so, but her reaction is worth mentioning. It could be interpreted as she found it uncomfortable to talk into the tape recorder, but in Tatiana Ivanovna's case this was not the main cause. During the entire interview, she was aware of the tape recorder, and she challenged the interviewer, spoke proudly about her past, and had no difficulties, apart from the mentioned incident, to talk freely. The most obvious reason for her hesitation would be that, based on previous experiences, she had reasons to doubt the intention of the surrounding world. This underlines the complex inter-subjectivity, which arises whenever the personal memory of "kulak" children and other repressed groups of the former USSR is addressed. Is the narrator really interested in talking about or hearing about his or her own childhood?[18]

This leads to questions concerning general principle – is personal memory an appropriate source at all? Traditionally, the idea has been that everyone possesses a memory, and that it is lasting and constant, following a person throughout his or her entire life.[19] "I remember everything" as Tatiana Ivanovna reassured several times during her interview, which would support the traditional impression of memory as a tape recorder, waiting to be played. Psychological literature has shown that memory changes overtime, and the greater distance in time we are from an event, the more problematic is it to know exactly what happened. It may be easier to talk about certain more traumatic events from a distance, but it is difficult to actually comprehend what happened. Details disappear and events tend to become confused. Even the lack of short term memory is familiar to most of us, when we forget a certain word in a sentence or a name. Rather than consider memory as being something unchangeable, it has been suggested that we are dealing with a synthesis of experiences.[20] The construction of memory is, according to Elizabeth Loftus, a matter of three stages: firstly the acquisition, secondly the retention, and thirdly the retrieval. In the acquisition

[18] To create knowledge is, in the words of Dori Laub, M.D., a process of constructing a narrative that does not yet exist "Massive Trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction. The victim's narratives – the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma – does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence". See Dori Laub, M.D: „Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening" pp. 57-74 in Shoshan Fellman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimoy. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York 1992, p. 57.

[19] Passerini, 1992, p. 6.

[20] Elizabeth F. Loftus "Our changeable memories: legal and practical implications" pp. 231-234 in *Nature Reviews*, Volume 4, March 2003, p. 231.

stage we witness a certain incident, which is stored in our minds during the retention stage, and finally formulated in the retrieval stage. In other words, we experience a certain event, then time passes, which can be long or short, and finally the memories are communicated.[21] In the construction of memory different intervening factors, which are not always appropriate, appear. Misinformation, misinterpretation, and misunderstanding, for example, also influence this shaping, and are important to include as points of critiques.[22] It has often been argued that memory is not what happened, but rather what seems to have happened.[23] In his rethinking of Stalinism, J. Arch Getty argued that although the personal memory had importance as experience, it would never stand up as a critical historical analysis. The argument was that the memoir was often recollected late in life and could be disproved, and hence was dubious.[24] Similarly, Mark B. Tauger, in a discussion on the internet-based H-Russia (18 April 2002) stated: " [...] I believe we have to approach memoirs and even letters from the period extremely cautiously, and treat them not as absolute truth but as emotional expressions of traumatized people. I write this not to minimize their suffering, but there is a substantial psychological literature on post-traumatic stress syndrome and on the effects of trauma on memory. This literature documents incontrovertibly that people's memories in such circumstances are highly unreliable. I refer interested and even sceptical readers to the writings of Elizabeth Loftus on this point. Her works have been used in numerous court cases related to historical memory, and I believe that they also apply here."

This should, however, not lead us to conclude that personal remembrance is worthless, because of the human difficulties in remembering every detail of a certain event. The individual memories of Holocaust survivors are, after all, still considered to be valid sources, in our attempt to understand Nazi atrocities and nobody would denounce the work of, for example, Primo Levi and Elie Weisel as dubious.[25] Tauger speaks of "absolute truth" as if it existed, yet it is not a matter of objectively recreating the past. Instead it is more about subjectively reconstructing elements of it. From this perspective it makes no sense to talk about "truth" as something "absolute". Also he speaks of "post-trauma" implying that Soviet citizens were traumatised at some point. But who traumatised them, if the Soviet state was not repressing them? And, does their trauma not reveal crucial aspects

[21] Elizabeth F. Loftus, *Eyewitness Testimony*, Cambridge 1979, pp. 21-22, pp. 52-53 and p. 88.
[22] Elizabeth F. Loftus and Hunter G. Hoffman "Misinformation and Memory, The Creation of New Memories" pp. 100-104 in *Journal of Experimental Psychology*: General 118 (1), March 1989.
[23] Joanne Bourke, for example, stated so during the workshop: *Memorizing War and Historicizing the Senses in the Twentieth Century* conducted at the European University Institute from 13-14 February 2004.
[24] J. Arch. Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges. The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 4-5 and pp. 211-220.
[25] Anne Appelbaum, *GULAG. A History*, London 2003, p. xxi.

about the nature of the society they grew up in? The main thing is to stress that we cannot talk about a "wrong" memory, since it all emerges from actual incidents.[26] Memory, as used in this section, is considered personal in the sense that it reproduces the worldview of the narrator.[27] There is a need, of course, to be specific about one's intentions, when this source is used. Therefore, this chapter discusses the nature of the Soviet regime through analysing how people, having lived in this regime, later construct their identity. Being inspired by Michel Foucault's understanding of the "subject" as a construction, shaped in relation to a power structure, we are not so much interested in what the narrators tell us, as in how they tell us.[28] It has to be remembered that Foucault does not work with "memory", but it should not prevent the use of his theory of "subjectivity". How do the participants describe themselves in relation to their own position, to their families and to the system they were brought up in? How do they vocalise the past, and how do they avoid certain themes? How do they use irony, be sincere, reproduce stereotypes, and over-dramatise their experiences? The impression is that the "subject" constructs him- or herself according to certain categories.[29] For example, using a political group, such as "enemy of the people" in order to define themselves. The purpose of our analysis is not to conduct a rigid discourse analysis. However, the terminology of the narratives will be addressed and the manner by which the "subject" is created verbally scrutinised. In more general terms, the interest is in specific findings in the narratives, which is constructed by the narrators and influenced by the experiences of the past. The narratives reveal how events like the deportations to Western Siberia influenced ordinary men, women and children to create their own "self-understanding". This is the crucial point of departure for the present analysis.

The interviews conducted by the present author, and upon which we will extensively draw, included a son of Volga-Germans, one being a kulak herself and eight kulak children. The Volga-German, Teodor Karlovich, was younger at the time of the interview than the rest of the participants. At 66 years he found it more difficult to recollect his experiences. It is also important to remember that he and his mother were deported in 1941, when Volga-Germans were repressed by the Soviet regime, and not during the dekulakisation campaign of 1929-32/33. The remaining interviewees were Tatiana Ivanovna (71 years old and born in deportation in 1934), Maria Vikentevna (76 years old), Georgii Mikhailovich (77 years old), Anatolii Dmitrevich (81 years old),

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[26] Alessandro Portelli "What makes oral history different" pp. 63-74 in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, London 1998 pp. 68-73.
[27] Ibid, 1998, pp. 70-73.
[28] Michel Foucault, „The Subject and Power" pp. 326-348 in James Faubion (ed.), *Michel Foucault. Power. The Essential works 2*, London 1994.
[29] Ibid, 326.

Valentin Vasileevich (81 years old), Julia Vasilevna (81 years old), Aleftina Vasileevna (82 years old), Uliana Petrovna (85 years old), and Agrafena Alekseevna (99 years old). All interviews were conducted at the private homes of the participants. It is also important to remember that all participants were prepared by the contact of the author, before they actually delivered their interviews. They would therefore be told by someone else than the author, what was interesting and what was not. Also we should remember that the author addressed them as "kulak children" and not something else, indicating that they would recollect their personal past knowing that this was of the main interest. Finally we should also remember that all participants lived their childhood in the special settlements of the West Siberian krai, implying that their experiences might differ from that of other kulak children, who lived in either the Northern part of Russia, the Urals or Kazakhstan. Questions during the interviews varied from their recollection about the authorities; experiences with discrimination: incidents of mortality either in their nuclear family or within the local community; memories about the living conditions: their memory of brothers, sisters, parents and grandparents. Daily matters, such as food supply, medical care, public nursing, and education were also topics that were discussed. Moreover, the "afterlife", or the long-term impact their experiences had on their lives afterwards and evidently also their career, was discussed. Finally, all of them were asked to reflect upon their childhood and characterise it. These interviews will be referred to as "interview", followed by the date it was conducted.

## 6.2. Nobody needs your tears

### *6.2.1 As for the past...*

In the introductory note above, we saw how a young boy was removed from his home after his father was arrested. The same physical intervention into the private sphere also appears in the narrative of Georgii Mikhailovich, whose father was arrested in February 1930, and executed as "enemy of the people" in March of that year. At aged only three, Georgii Mikhailovich was taken away from his mother and placed in an orphanage, located in Narym krai (some 500 kilometres north of Tomsk). The administration of the orphanage strove to make him forget his parents. His origins were changed: his identity, name, fathers name, surname, birthday and general background. He was born on 1 May 1927 and his parents had christened him Igor Tailakov, but when he was placed in the orphanage his birthday was changed to 1 December 1929 and he was renamed Georgii Nosikov. It was only by chance that he in 1992 discovered who he actually was, and considered re-taking his birth name. However he decided not to, as his given birth name was an

empty shell. Everything – his trade union book, his soldier's book, his educational papers, his working papers, his identity cards, and his passports, were issued in his "Soviet" name, and it would therefore imply a fundamental restructuring of his life if he took the name his parents had given him.[30] The Soviet authorities had successfully eradicated his link to his parents, and they had done so in order to transform Georgii Mikhialovich into a blank sheet, which could be filled through education, political upbringing and indoctrination.

It became clear during the interview with Georgii Mikhailovich that he was not the only Soviet orphan who had experienced this rather radical intervention in his life. He mentioned at least one other person, Dan Danilov, who had a similar story. He read about this particular case from the local Novosibirian newspaper, *Chestnoe Slovo*, which had published an interview with Dan Danilov.[31] Furthermore the Russian-born professor, Misha Nikolayev, explains in his written memoir how he had his identity changed when his parents were executed as enemies of the people in 1929. He states:

> The authorities' purpose in taking orphans away from their relatives was that they should never think about their arrested parents. Lest they, God forbid, grow up into potential dissidents, potential avengers of their parents' death. It made very good sense to change a child's surname. I'm sure that the authorities achieved their purpose: the majority of the children, if not all, remembered nothing about their parents.
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> (Source: Misha Nikolayev, "Orphanage" pp. 166-179 in Natasha Perova and Arch Tait (eds.), *ZIP and other Stories. Childhood*, Moscow 1998 pp. 170-172.)

In a system, such as the Soviet one, which was based on the idea that generations could be separated emotionally and that personality was a matter of environmental upbringing rather than biological ties, it was only natural to believe that a person's identity could be changed. The biologist, T.D. Lysenko, for example stated that heritage, and especially the human variant of it, depended entirely on environment.[32] If an enemy child was placed in a Soviet orphanage, given a Soviet identity and taught the right morals and ethics, he or she would eventually be a well-

[30] Interview 5 September 2003.
[31] Viktor Timakov, "Мальчишка из Владивостока Воплощение американской мечты " in *Честное Слово* № 51, 2000.
[32] Lynne Attwood, *The New Soviet Man and Woman. Sex Role Socialization in the USSR*, London 1990, p. 39

disciplined *Homo Sovieticus*. That the circumstances in the orphanages were appalling and the political education was far from effective, was a secondary issue. The main priority was that the children should forget their pasts as the past – the peasant upbringing – represented a threat to society. Georgii Mikhailovich, Misha Nikolayev and many others repressed any recollection about their parents. Misha Nikolayev spoke of a "pre-memory", which was a synthesis of what people (most notably the caretakers of his orphanage) had told him. Georgii Mikhailovich was fortunate in that he could contact the Russian authorities in 1992 and get his personal files, but this did not mean that he suddenly had re-established a relationship to his parents.[33] He asserted that he was located in a place of limbo, not knowing who he was.

The emotional separation was most effective among the younger orphan kulak children, since the influence of the parents had vanished completely. In the case where the children stayed with their families, as most of the narrators did, the system found it much more problematic to intervene. The impression is that kulak children, and those who remained with their parents, choose to forget and distance themselves from their biological heritage. As part the strategy to survive and to advance in society, they would denounce their past and adopt a Soviet identity. They were motivated by the knowledge that it could be dangerous if it was revealed that a certain person had "kulak ties". In the rare cases where peasants returned from deportation to their villages of origin, it was well-known that they were vulnerable to the wrath of their neighbours. Any conflict could easily result in yet another denouncement, yet another arrest, or at the worst – yet another deportation. A significant number of the narrators experienced more than one deportation during their childhood. The family of Aleftina Vasilievna was deported twice in 1929 and 1931. Pavel Fedorovich and his family was similarly deported twice in those two years, while Andrei Efimovich and his relatives were deported three times – the first two times in the period 1929-31, and the third time in the autumn of 1933.[34] Despite the fact that dekulakisation officially ended in 1932[35] the impact of the kulak still hung over the villages like a ghost in the years to follow. Therefore, a great number of previously deported peasants and their families decided to move to the cities, get employment in the factories, and live a quite lives as anonymous workers.[36] The threat of the kulaks, however, re-

[33] This file was given to the author: "Комитет государственной безопастности СССР: Управление по Новосибирской области № 4/II-6820" Novosibirsk 20 February 1992.
[34] Interview, 16 August 2003, GANO, F-400 d. 22, GANO A-72/11.03.96GANO, G-355, 20.12.94 and GANO, G-107/24.03.95.
[35] R.W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, *Years of Hunger*, London 2003, p. 47.
[36] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Pesants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization*, New York 1994, pp. 238-46.

emerged in July 1937, when the NKVD issued Order No. 00447 to round up "former kulaks and other anti-Soviet elements", and a large number of previously deported peasants and their families were re-arrested, shot in quotas or placed in GULAG camps.[37]

Many "kulak" children decided to keep quite about their past, since they considered it to be dangerous. Maria Vikentevna was asked during her interview (16 August 2003), whether she had told her children anything about her past, to which she answered: "No I did not say anything".[38] Her children wondered why she had lived in Narym krai, which, after all, was known for the special settlements, but she avoided the questions by answering that they had lived in Tomsk and had been stationed there. It was not until 1991, when the Soviet Union broke up and the first democratic government of the Russian Federation decided to rehabilitate former victims of the Stalinist repression,[39] that she started to speak about her experience. Elena Petrovna, who works in GATO (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi Oblasti), also said that her grandmother, a descendent of a "kulak", remained silent about her past for decades. This strategy of not knowing, or denying, still exists among some of the survivors of Stalinist repression. On 6 September 2003 the decedent of a Volga-German, Teodor Karlovich, was interviewed for this research, and he constantly stated that he could not remember anything. When he was asked to describe life in the special settlements, he replied: "can you imagine what it was like?" He would continue by talking about something else – either domestic contemporary politics or his life as a truck driver. He spoke from the position of "not knowing" or distancing himself completely from the narrative. There was very little emotional link between the narrator and the subject of the narrative, even if he was clearly uncomfortable talking about his childhood. That which caused this is beyond the remit of the thesis: one possibility is that he was so young that could not remember, but it has often been connected to the unconscious strategy of protecting oneself from a traumatic past.[40] In light of this public denial, and its influences on personal memory before 1991, the analysis now moves on to how those who were "kulak" children participating in this investigation, were able to verbalise their own subjectivity in relation to the dekulakisation.

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[37] Оперативный приказ народного комиссара внутриних дел Союза С.С.Р № 00447 «об операции по репрессированию бывших кулаков, уголовников и др. антисоветских элементов», Moscow, 30 June 1937.
[38] All translation to English from Russian is done by the author, unless otherwise mentioned.
[39] S.N. Ushakova, "Реабилитационные дела репрессированной крестьян как исторический источник" pp. 87-111 in S.A. Krasilnikov, *Маргиналы. В Советском обществе, 1920-1930-х годов*, Novosibirisk 2001.
[40] Dori Laub and Nanette Auerhahn "Knowing and not Knowing Massive Psychic Trauma: Forms of Traumatic Memory" pp. 287-302 in *The Internation Journal of Phycho-Analysis*, 1993, Volume 74, Part 2, pp. 288 and p. 291.

*6.2.2 The lost home*

The life stories often commence by describing their existence prior to the deportation, in the places of origin where either the parents or grandparents had been living as peasants. In most cases, this is based on what their parents had told the interviewees, since some were either very young, or had not been born until after the deportation.[41] Maria Vikentevna, who was only a one year old at the time, described how she and her family were exiled from Belarus – their *Родина* (motherland) as she referred to it.[42] Uliana Petrovna also used this term, emphasising the connection to the region of origin.[43] In this part of the narrative it is usually the energy and initiative of either the father or grandfather who would be the centre of attention. Vasilii Grigorevich, for example, explained how his grandfather had built their house, which his father inherited, thus signifying a continuation referring to the traditional way of peasant life, where the son followed the father.[44] Anatolii Dmitrevich stated: "...and, of course, [the authorities took] the cultivated land from those people, who loved the land..." indicating an emotional connection to the land from which they had been torn away from. His grandfather was described as an enterprising person, who knew the land, cultivated it, worked on it and based his entire identity upon it. But, he was prohibited from continuing in this way of life.[45]

Uliana Petrovna explained how her large family – comprising eight children and two parents – needed their three cows and three horses. The father had only employed members of the family, assisting him in fieldwork, cleaning the house and participating in other daily assignments. "They made us kulaks," she asserted, suggesting that it was a groundless accusation.[46] In her interview with Anastasia Posadskaya-Vanderbeck Irina Ivanovna Kniazeva said: "There were no boys in the family, so by fifteen I was already plowing. First, they set me to harrowing. When I was ten or eleven, I harrowed the fields, and then when I got a little bigger, I took up plowing, and I plowed and I plowed".[47] This would suggest that the household of her father was based on the traditional organisation of the Soviet peasantry – that is the family. She would argue that her family was not treated like "kulaks", but on the other hand her narrative also reveals that "We didn't join the kolkhoz. We were scared, you know. And so they ruined us, they took everything. They took the

[41] See for example GANO B-142/29.02.96, where the writer, Aleksandra Sergeevna admits that most of her knowledge originates from her mother.
[42] Interview 16 August 2003.
[43] Interview 23 August 2003.
[44] GANO Kh-89/13.12.94.
[45] Interview 17 August 2003.
[46] Interview 23 August 2003.
[47] Irina Ivanovna Kniazeva, "A Life in a Peasant Village"pp. 117-131 in Barbara Alpern Engel and Anastaia Podaskaya-Vanderbeck, *A Revolution of Their Own. Voices of Women in Soviet History*, Oxford 1998, p. 121.

animals, they took the horses, they took the cow – we had one cow – they took everything".[48] This was very close to the treatment that met the "kulaks". Aleftina Vasilevna would state: "they considered us kulaks".[49] They were not "kulaks", but only stigmatised as such by forces outside their control. Maria Vikentevna in this connection highlighted that her father was a middle peasant who never hired "batraki" (rural labourer) and that the poor peasants, later labelling him as "kulak", were those who did not want to work.[50] Tatiana Ivanovna passionately asserted that it was only the poor they deported, while the real "kulaks" remained in the home region.[51]

The last statement was clearly an emotional expression, and is difficult to prove. It is, in this context, unimportant what she says but rather why she does it. In relation to Foucault's construction of the "subject", the "kulak" children clearly placed their fathers, and thus themselves, in the category of victims. They had not done anything wrong, and they were unjustly punished for trying to support their families and from their perspective there was no objective reason for their deportation. They all belonged to large families (comprising four to ten children)[52], who purchased livestock and tools in order to support their family – they had to survive. "What kind of kulaks were we?" Aleftina Vasilevna asked rhetorically.[53] They would support Aleksandr Chayanov's theory, elaborated in chapter 2, that the Russian peasantry was a family based non-wage economy – motivated by the needs, possibilities, construction and mobility of its members. The impression of "kulak" children was that the category "kulak" was a political construction, to which their parents were unjustly subjected during the repressive transformation of Soviet agriculture during the 1930s – the children innocently suffered as part of a larger event outside of their own control. This idea of victimisation can be detected in other types of Soviet life stories. Research done on narratives of Russian women shows that they, in contrast to for example Western women, focus primarily on developments beyond the private sphere – that is something they have no influence on. Whereas the autobiographies of Western women tend to narrate the story about private issues, such as the family, husband and children. Russian women lean on the testimony of history – "we were there, we suffered during the transformation of society and now we will tell you about it".[54] This urge to relate their fate to external developments clearly

[48] Ibid., p. 122
[49] Interview 16 August 2003.
[50] Interview 16 August 2003.
[51] Interview 24 August 2003.
[52] The size of ten children can be found in the tale of T.A. Akimtseva: GATO, f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 3, l. 1.
[53] Interview 16 August 2003.
[54] Shiela Fitzpatrick, "Life and Times" pp. 3-17, Shiela Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slazkine, *Life Stories of Russian Women. From 1917 to the Second World War*, Princetone 2000, p. 3.

resembles the kulak children's narratives: their victimisation was caused by Communism, Stalinism or simply history.

The kulak children's connection to the home region or *Родина* (motherland) has a rather interesting angle when the narratives mention the expropriation of their family household – when the private sphere was invaded and the family removed from their house. Only rarely do we actually get a description of who committed these acts. An impression is that people found their homes violated. For example, Afanasii Avkeptevich explains how his family was given just twenty minutes to pack the bare necessities and to leave their houses.[55] This impression can also be found in Vladimir Ivanovich's letter when he mentions: "...they gave nothing to the deportees".[56] But the passive sentences dominate – "they made us kulak", "they considered us kulaks", "they deported us", or "the family was deported". Who "they" were remains a mystery – it is as if the intruders are invisible, or at least nameless. "Who is to blame?" Anotolii Dmitrevich asked rhetorically and answered: "The system we lived in!" This clearly illustrates that what happened was an impersonal act undertaken by a "system". What the system was, and who worked within it, is never revealed.

In Litvinenko's study from 1993, Victor M.s recollects two men with hunter's gun, who enter the house uninvited and sit at the bench in the kitchen "Where had they appeared from? Why had they come to us? Why had they walked in uninvited?"[57] The men had no identity they simply arrived like thunder out of a clear sky. There is information that it is the local village Soviet that has sent the men, but this is information given by an old man looking back to his childhood: the boy did not see any names or faces. The next day the family was led into the yard, and here they witness the waiting "crowd". Although it is neighbours who the family must have recognised, it is only the political activist, Aganka Bibkova, who is actually given a name. The rest just stand there as "loafers and idlers who had come to get fat at the expense of others."[58] Ivan Arkhipovich's letter of rehabilitation is perhaps one of the exceptions where there is a full record of the people responsible: "...thrown out of the house by: the chairman of the village Soviet Musiiak Aleksandr Timofevich (born 1903); the activist Telebni Zakhar Mironovich and the executive chairman of the village

[55] GANO, M-101/21.02.96.
[56] GANO, № 13/12.09.95.
[57] Litvinenko, 1998, p. 35 [My underline M.K.].
[58] Ibid, 37.

Soviet Akhonin Andrei Petrovich (born 1903)".[59] This is the only time, at least in the material examined here, that we actually discover who the intruders were.

There are several reasons why an intruder becomes "invisible" when people are asked to recollect their past. A simple answer is that the former kulak children did not find their identity important: what was important was to emphasis the energy of the father and that he was unjustly victimised. In this context the identity of the persons intervening might very well be considered secondary, they were impersonal idlers and thieves.[60] It is also conceivable that the children, in light of the chaos accompanying the collectivisation and dekulakisation, forgot this detail about the identity of the intruder or were too young to remember. Additionally, it also reveals what their parents decided to tell their children afterwards, as the children formed their memory regarding this stage in life from the tales of the older generation. It is also possible that the kulak children simply did not know, since many of the intruders were members of the 25,000ners, OGPU agents and etc., who had been sent into the countryside as emissaries by the regime. However, Ivan Arkhipovich's letter suggests that some of the kulak children had some information about the identity of the intruders. It seems reasonable to assume that the "invisible intruder" became "invisible" during the retention stage, when memory was transformed into a narrative, as the physical invasion of the homes was so overwhelming that the narrator's sight became clouded – the kulak children did not see human beings degrading them or their families but an impersonal "they" or a certain "system". Although it is disputable as to whether the former kulak children would describe their memory as being a "trauma",[61] the inability to link the intruder to a person may well be caused by their own difficulties in comprehending the full extent of the invasion of the homes.

### *6.2.3 The deportation*

The intruder, which transformed into a guard, remains "invisible" or impersonal when the story reaches the physical deportation, where the narrator is removed from the European part of the Soviet Union, and in the case of the interviewees and the relatives to the Narym region of Tomsk Oblast in Western Siberia. As the children did not know who their guards were, they had probably never met them before, and since they were emotionally overwhelmed by what had happened the people guarding them are not relevant. Rather than focusing on who guarded them, we are told

[59] GANO, K-372/15.03.95.
[60] The narrator and oral historian, who will later analyse the interview, might have different fields of interest. As Donald Ritchie assert: "People remember what *they* think is important, not necessarily what the interviewer considers most consequential" (Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, New York 1995, p. 12).
[61] Catherine Marridal, *Nights of Stone. Death and Memory in Russia* London 2000, p. 20-22.

what the deportation was like, which adds another element to the construction of victimisation. Since the infrastructure of this part of the country was underdeveloped, many different means of transportation were used in order to take the "kulaks" and their families to their final destination. In a letter of rehabilitation Ivan Dmitrievich remembers that his family travelled by foot for several miles into the Taiga before arriving at their ultimate destination.[62] Serafima Afanasevna also recalls, in her written recollection, the long hike into the wilderness when she tells about her and her family's deportation in 1931.[63] Another kulak child, Mikhail Sudorovich, tells, in his essay, that he and the family walked barefoot for 350 kilometres.[64] Whether this is conceivable or if Mikhail Sudorovich is exaggerating in order to make his story more interesting is unclear. Undoubtedly, people were forced to walk for great distances. During the interview with Valentin Vasileevich, he remembered several stages of his deportation, which started with the train transportation. At their arrival in Novosibirsk they were placed on a riverboat, which would take them upriver – via the Ob, to Narym krai. Here they arrived on an island, where the deportees were left with instructions to construct a settlement.[65] Anatolii Dmitrevich has, in his interview, a similar recollection of travelling by boat and being left on the shore of an island with nothing to survive on.[66] Aleftina Vasilevna also recalls in her interview that a large number of people were left on an island with no food, housing or heating.[67] It is important to emphasise that there is no information, in any of the interviews, as to whether they arrived at the same island, or if these were different islands in the region.

These trips were very rough, with serious physical stress on people's health. Kalashnikov recalls (in his written memory) that the sanitary facilities were more or less non-existent and people had to remain in their own excrements for days during his train journey. The odour within the train was terrible, and people became sick: "People were breathing fug, and in stuffy air many became sick".[68] Anatolii Dmitrevich also stressed that the boat that brought his family to Narym krai was not suitable for human transportation – it was usually used for transporting animals and grains. Subsequently, the deportees on board were exposed to the rain and cold, and as they were travelling during autumn the deportees were all freezing, hungry and sick.[69] Many died during

[62] GANO, B-409, 07.05.96 and GANO, B-35, 28.02.96.
[63] GATO, f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 43, l. 1.
[64] GATO, f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 26. l. 2.
[65] Interview 30 August 2003.
[66] Interview 17 August 2003.
[67] Interview 16 August 2003.
[68] GATO, f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 17, l. 1.
[69] Interview 17 August 2003.

these exhausting transportations and in her letter of rehabilitation Aleksandra Pavlova recalls that many died and were buried on the way.[70] A story, which would seem to sum up the whole development from expropriation of the family household, through deportation to actual placement in the special settlements, is the account of Nikolai Petrovich:

> After the night of the Easter holiday, in May, they arrested my mother, Averianova Varvara Egorovna, and the family of 7 children, including myself, and threw us out of the house. They placed us, the four oldest children, on two horses, and tied together the reins, so we would not run, and the three smallest were put to sleep naked.
>
> They brought us to the Atiashevo station – thirty kilometres away. [...] On the third day the wagons arrived and we were loaded in these, some families per wagon, and [...] they locked it. There was no toilet [...] People became wild [...] In the wagon seven people died from starvation. We got to Tomsk and they took us out with several other families. They also unloaded several corpses, children, young people, and the elderly.
>
> From Tomsk they sent us to the jetty, and loaded us on riverboats, and sailed us up the Chulim river. How many days we sailed, I don't remember [...] On the way we had two children died, Nastia and Vania. [...] Four [more] children died. They left my father, mother and me with people from our village. We walked through the small settlement. Everywhere here were dead people, hunger and epidemic.
>
> (Source. S.S. Vilenskii, *Дети ГУЛАГа. 1918-1956*, Moscow 2002, p. 117)[71]

That which is added to the construction of victimisation are three important parameters: death, hunger and disease. We find in several accounts, as when Julia Vasileevna summed-up her existence in the special settlements, these three particular words.[72] A fourth element can also be added: separation.

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[70] GANO, A-137, 27.05.96.

[71] My translation from Russian to English, except for the passage: "People became wild [...] In the wagon seven people died from starvation. We got to Tomsk and they took us out several families. They also unloaded several corpses, children, young people, and the elderly", which is translated in Appelbaum 2003, p. 318.

[72] Interview, 30 August 2003.

*6.2.4 Separation*

One aspect of this separation was noted above, when the fate of orphan "kulak" children, who had their identities changed by the Soviet system, was examined. At this stage the separation was complete, and almost all the children forgot their parents. The separation from the parents is witnessed in many of the narratives, either because the parents died from over-exertion in the Taiga and Tundra or because – especially the father – was deported without their families. In the above recollection of Nikolai Petrovich, the father was the first arrested, while the rest of the family was left alone for a month – when they also were thrown out of their house. In Uliana Petrovna's interview we see this separation on two occasions: first when her father was arrested before the rest of the family, and sent away, while the children stayed with her mother; and secondly after having been reunited with the father, she was left alone with him when her mother died.[73] Kalashnikov also explains how his father died, and later how his brothers and sisters, by being placed at different orphanages, were separated once again – the total dissolution of the family.[74] Matrena Semenovna explains in her written memory how she and her three sisters were deported without their parents: "[...] we lived there [in deportation] for a long time, and our parents were not there at all, we were alone, starving, freezing and sick".[75]

The separation of the family also appears in recollections where families had already been deported to Narym krai. After being exiled from the Ukraine in 1930, the family of M.F. Abramenko managed in 1935 to re-establish a kind of life together in the special settlements. The father supposedly said to the children: "...now we can work, since they can not send us any further..." In 1937, however, the father was re-arrested as an "enemy of the people", as part of the re-escalation of the anti-kulak campaigns that year, and deported with another eight men from the small settlement in which they lived. None of these men returned to their families, and left behind wives, children and other relatives who were grief-stricken: "...again there was pain and outrage in our souls".[76] A substantial number of letters written by "kulak" children by the beginning of the 1990s,[77] addresses an uncertainty about the fate of their father especially. At some stage in the

[73] Interview, 23 August 2003.
[74] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 17, l. 3.
[75] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 16, ll. 1-2.
[76] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 1, l. 2.
[77] After the government of the Russian Federation decided to rehabilitate all victims of the political repression, many applications were send to the local authorities all over the country. For more details on this see: S.N. Uzhakova,"Реабилитационные дела репрессированных крестьян как исторический источник" pp. 87-11 in S.A. Krasilnikov (red.), *Маргиналы. В Советском обществе 1920-1930-х годов*, Novosibirsk 2001.

place of origin or during deportation, he disappeared without any further record and relatives wished to gain information about what had happened to him.[78] Great uncertainty in the lives of kulak children was caused by the physical intrusion of the Soviet regime and consequently the separation of the family. Many were uncertain as to what had happened to their closest relatives.

Separation works on several levels, and is much more than being merely separated from the parents. It is also the separation from their *Родина* (motherland or place of birth), which is very significant in the construction of subjectivity in the stories of the narrators. This pattern – of relating themselves to a certain geographical area which they no longer are part of – can be recognised among Russian emigrant children as well. Even those who were born in exile, and subsequently only heard about *Родина* through their parents, would have emotional connections to the country they left: "The memory of *родина*, the longing for it, the hope to return to it and work for its rebirth pass-through the stories as a leitmotif [...] "[79] Although these children lived in one place they did not really belong. However, there is an interesting paradox in relation to at least the deported "kulak" children, since none of them returned to the region they thought of as their *родина*, when the opportunities arose after 1991. The kulak children all stayed in the regions around Novosibirsk and Tomsk – in the case of those deportees going to Narym krai – and established a life there. Uliana Petrovna, who used the terminology of *родина* in her tale, stayed in Narym krai until 1980, when she as a pensioner moved to Novosibirsk in order to live with her children. She never left Novosibirsk when the Soviet Union disappeared in 1991.[80] The explanation is as Julia Vasileevna stated: "we did not have anything to return to".[81] In light of expropriation of the family household and deportation, everything that had belonged to the families in Belarus, the Ukraine, the Urals, Western Siberia, and the Black Earth region of Russia was confiscated by the Soviet state. The separation from the places of origin of the kulak families was complete, and what was left was an illusion about a geographical location far away. Despite the fact that it was difficult to see that these people had such experiences, as they all seemed to lead normal lives, they would naturally connect their upbringing to the terminology of losing their birthplace, childhood or youth. In Litvinenko's study Victor M. states: "our childhood disappeared just as fast as the smoke in the air"[82] and during

[78] See for example: GANO Kh-55/Kh-94, GANO T-219/26.04.94, GANO F-409/18.10.95, GANO Ch-23/28.06.95, GANO F-55/05.04.95, GANO G-171/03.05.95, and GANO B-168/20.05.95.
[79] Kn. Petr Dolgorukov, "Чувство Родины у детей" pp. 162-186 in V.V. Zenkovskii (ed.) *Дети Эмиграции. Воспоминания.*, Moscow 2001, p. 162.
[80] Interview 23 August 2003.
[81] Interview, 30 August 2003.
[82] Litvinenko, 1998, p. 42.

the interview with Aleftina Vasilevna she asserts: "all my life I had no childhood – no youth".[83] Despite the fact that the former "kulak" children lived in Novosibirsk or Tomsk, and had established a living, they still related to another place far away. The term "rootless" is not used in the material, but it seems plausible that many would consider themselves as such, if the above were summarised into one word.

Olga Adamova-Sloizberg recalls how she, before being victimised herself, experienced the separation for the first time through the eyes of her housemaid. The housemaid had visited her sister in Moscow by 1930, and when returning to her village she realised that her family had been dekulakised. The husband was sent to a camp, while her mother and children had been exiled to Siberia. She never again saw them and in 1935, by then working for Adamova-Sloizberg as a nanny, she received a letter about how her own children had died from scarlet fever. Not knowing that her fate would soon separate her own family, Olga Adamova-Slozberg said to herself, after having talked to her husband about this story: "if you chop down trees, the chips are bound to fly." This means that the separation of the kulak family was seen by a substantial number of Soviet citizens as a historic necessity. The Soviet regime had collectivised agriculture, because it was necessary, and some had to be expelled, because they objected to the goal – no innocent people were victimised.[84] Stanley Cohen defines in his writing this emotional state as the interpretive denial.[85] Soviet citizens saw that families got separated as a direct result of the collectivisation campaign, yet they lived in a society where they were afraid of the consequences of such knowledge. It was part of the official discourse to describe the ongoing process as necessary, and therefore people decided to follow this line in the hope of surviving themselves. It was true that people were victimised, but it was probably their own fault. Olga Adamova-Sloizberg's experience is a good example of how short-sighted such a strategy could be in a Soviet context. In 1936 she came home realising that her own husband had been taken by the Soviet authorities – this was a man, who himself had said that the fate of the housemaid was a historical necessity in the overall development of Soviet society. Now their family would also be a "... chip bound to fly".[86]

[83] Interview, 16 August 2003.
[84] Olga Adamova-Sloizberg, "My Journey" pp. 1-88 in Simoen Vilensky, *Till My Tale is Told. Women's Memoirs of the GULAG*, Indianapolis 1999, pp. 3-4.
[85] Stanley Cohen, *State of Denial. Knowing about attrocities and suffering*, Cambridge 2001, p. 7-9.
[86] Adamova-Sloizberg, 1999, p. 5.

*6.2.5 Relationships*

Being settled in the Taiga and Tundra of Western Siberia, kulak children had to rethink their relationship to two "institutions": their family and the authorities. Indeed, the authorities became if not the most important, then at least a very significant element in their lives. There was an attempt from the authorities, to break the traditional relationship between children and parents; either by education, political indoctrination, or by simple separation. The OGPU advised the local authorities of the Narym krai to educate the kulak children in the collective manner, in order to eradicate the traditional skills of their parents and grandparents.[87] Furthermore, those local schools outside the special settlements which did not admit the kulak children into the classrooms would be ordered to change their procedures immediately.[88] On 17 March 1933 the presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union allowed those kulak children, who acted consciously and had attained the required education and had relevant work, to regain the right of voting in elections for the local councils.[89] Many of those children applying for the restitution of the voting seem to have been treated positively, which would indicate that there were attempts to include them in society, whenever they acted consciously.[90] The question obviously is how the former kulak children remembered this and situated themselves. Would they emphasise the possibilities given to them by the authorities or the dehumanisation during the years of deportation?

When reading through letters, memoirs or listening to the interviews of kulak children, the parents appear as crucial characters in the construction of "subjectivity". In the aforementioned recollection of Nikolai Petrovich, the narrative was constructed on a short presentation by the writer, and then an unravelling of the father's fate: "I – Averianov Nikolai Petrovich, was born in 1921, with the nationality of Mordvin. I write about myself and about my parents. In 1932 [in] April they arrested my father Averianov Petra Matveevich during the night and I do not know where they took him".[91] In the letters of rehabilitation read for this research, this pattern in the construction of the text is repeated almost every time: always the father first, then the mother and finally the children. Despite the fact that the letters were written by one of the children, they appear to have been secondary; the

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[87] G.M. Adibekov, "Спецпереселенцы – жертвы «сплошной коллективизации». Из документов «особой папки» Политбюро ЦК ВКП(б)" in *Исторический архив*, Volume 2, number 4, 1994 p. 158.
[88] Ibid., p. 168.
[89] "Постановление президиума ЦИК Союза ССР о порядке восстановления в избирательных правах детей кулаков" V.P. Danilov and S.A. Krasilnikov, *Спецпереселенцы в Западной Сибири. 1933-1938*, Novosibirsk 1994, p. 14.
[90] See; GATO f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2806, l. 1; GATO, f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2867, l. 1; GATO f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2878, l. 2; GATO f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2894, l. 2; and GATO, f. r-430, op. 3, delo 2903, l. 2.
[91] Vilenskii et al, *Дети ГУЛАГа*, 2002, p. 117.

main object is *Глава семьи* (the head of the family).[92] The fate of the father would become the fate of the whole family. As Aleftina Vasilevna expressed: "They considered us *outcast.*"[93] This was despite the fact that it was not her, but her father who had lost voting rights and would be reduced to being a social outcast. The children regained, as mentioned, voting rights in 1933, and it is not entirely correct that the whole family was considered as being made up of outcasts.

There are many reasons the term "outcast" may be used. The first reason is related to public discourse introduced in 1987 by the last General Secretary of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, where emphasis was placed on human issues. This was a conscious political shift launched in order to gain public support, which until then had not existed.[94] A significant part of this emphasis would be a thorough attack on Stalinism, totalitarianism and political repression. Although the kulak children represent a significant part of those victimised by political terror, it was mainly adults who attracted attention from the state: the "kulak" in the case of dekulakisation.[95] Public terminology was constructed around the fate of the father, and in this context it makes sense why children would also speak from his position. As mentioned above, in relation to the projects in Vladimir in 1984 and 1988 undertaken by the Oral History Club, there are examples from the Soviet context of how public discourse to a large extent significantly influenced the shaping of personal memory.[96] The second reason is possibly found in the nature of the Russian and Soviet culture, which to a large extent is, and was, patriarchal. History is often written from a male perspective, while women and children are either unnoticed or at best secondary.[97] Whenever women and children appear it is often as passive participants standing on the sidelines watching how the men fight the important battles.[98] Being thus situated, it makes sense as to why the kulak children would place the father and his fate at the centre of their own narratives. A third reason might be psychological – as the narrators might have misunderstood the inner logic of the event, and adjusted their parents' fate as being that of their own. It has been suggested that when people undergo overwhelming experiences, misunderstanding of certain coherencies may occur in the memory and can be reproduced as

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[92] See as examples: GANO Iu-3.2802, GANO Kh-89. 23/7.94, GANO Reab.Kul. 1 Kul-5 28/6.94, and GANO N-155, 28.08.95.
[93] Interview: 17 August 2003.
[94] William B. Husband, "Introduction: The Persistence of Memory in Modern Russia" pp. xiii-xviii in William B. Husband (ed.), *The Human Tradition Modern Russia*, Wilmington 2000, p. xiii.
[95] Elena Iur'evna Sutkova, *Советские политические репрессии в отношении несовершеннолетних (1917-1953гг.)* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Inzhevsk 2003, pp. 3ff.
[96] Khubova, Ivankiev and Sharova, 1992, pp. 95-96.
[97] In Barbara Evan Clemments', *Bolshevik Women*, Cambridge 1997 the point of departure, for example, is: "Less visible seen, as the eyes followed the men of the Council of People's Commissars, were the tens of thousands of woman..." (p.1).
[98] See for example: Maurice Hindus, *Red Bread*, London 1931 p. 175.

historical facts: things that never actually happened are recollected so convincingly that the narrators believe them to be the truth.[99] A fourth reason might be that kulak children used irony in order to situate themselves in a larger historical development. When Aleftina Vasilevna uses the sentence: "I am not a human being – I am an enemy of the people"[100] she obviously makes a critical and ironic projection about perceptions of herself and her parents. Aleftina Vasilevna could also have used the terminology as an ironic indicator of solidarity, as when African-Americans apply the term "nigger" to themselves as a slang term suggesting group unity, coherency and solidarity. It is known from interviews with Holocaust survivors that irony is often applied when they recollect their experiences in the Nazi concentration camps.[101] However, this is not a very Russian way of expressing oneself – and it is questionable whether irony alone can explain the use of a term, which not necessarily applies to kulak children. It is more conceivable that such term serves as a metaphor very often used in the Russian culture: that of *suffering*. Although it would be wrong to claim that it only is the Russians who would focus on their suffering, and also misleading to assert that *all* Russians possess this mentality, it is an integrated part of Russian rhetoric: "we have suffered more than anyone else, thus nobody understands us". There exists, what Daniel Rancour-Laferrier terms, a "cult of suffering" in Russia, which influence the Russian way of conceptualising the "self" or the "subject".[102] This cult of suffering is probably important in the use of the term "I am not a human being – I am an enemy of the people".

A fifth reason is the possibility that kulak children used the term of suffering consciously in order to place themselves along with their parents, in order to signal that the political project of dividing the generations had failed. In the narratives kulak children seldom consider themselves different from their parents. Tatiana Ivanovna argued that the *komendatura*[103] treated everybody – including also the children – as "enemies of the people". Likewise T.A. Akimtsev argued that "the komendatura repressed us, they found themselves to be different from us..."[104] In other words; the komendatura and thereby the Soviet regime was alienated, when seen from the perspective of the special settlers, but also from the position of the regime. Maria Vikentevna was asked whether kulak children were treated any different from the local non-enemy children, to which she first answered "no". However, upon thinking the question through, she changed this statement declaring:

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[99] Loftus and Hoffman, 1989.
[100] In order to summarise Aleftina Vasilevna interview she did so: Interview, 16 August 2003.
[101] This information was given to the author by Dori Laub M.D. in a telephone conversation on Sunday 1 August 2004.
[102] Daniel Rancour-Laferrier, *The Slave Soul of Russia. Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering*, New York 1995, p. 3.
[103] The administrative organ within the special settlements.
[104] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 3, l. 2.

"yes there was someone, who said "oh that is the children of "kulaks"".[105] This indicates that she remembered, or seems to have remembered, being categorised as a "kulak". Aleftina Vasilevna emphasised that despite hunger, death and disease, ravaging the special settlements, the love of parents towards their children was unaffected. At one stage she was offered the chance to live with a local family who could supply her with food and protect her against death and disease outside the settlements, but her mother replied: "you are still my child and I can't give you away".[106]

When a rebellious attitude by a child is mentioned it is almost never directed against the parents, but rather in opposition to the authorities. Valentin Vasileevich explained how he had been a disobedient young pupil in school and always strove to subvert the official teaching. He was very proud when recollecting how he had spelled the name of First Secretary in Leningrad S.M. Kirov backwards, so that it read "Vorik" (thief) – an action that resulted in him being expelled from school.[107]

It is plausible that "kulak" children were disobedient against the Soviet authorities within the sites of deportation. Georgii Mikhialovich lived in the Bokchar orphanage,[108] where there were reported serious disciplinary problems.[109] He remembers how non-enemy children from Leningrad were evacuated to the orphanage during the Second World War in 1942, and that the administration did everything in its power to separate these children from the "enemy children".[110] The orphan kulak children – who had already lived there – were sent to another orphanage, and they had to walk for almost 300 kilometres. As he explained during the interview: "the Leningrad children are "ours" [*nashi*, which emphasised that they belonged to the proletariat], whereas we were "enemies of the people"".[111] Therefore, it makes sense as to why a substantial number of kulak children, when looking back at their childhood, emphasise their disobedience against Soviet authority and consequently placed themselves alongside their parents. They were proud of having resisted political indoctrination and having retained emotional connections to their parents. The question is to what extent this is representative for the behaviour of all kulak children, even if there were examples of disobedience.

The distancing from the older generations does appear in the narratives, although it is more implicit than explicit. Victor M., for example, recalls: "... I became a student at the Sverdlovsk

[105] Interview, 16 August 2003.
[106] Interview, 16 August 2003.
[107] Interview, 30 August 2003.
[108] He mentions this in his written memory: Vilenskii, *Дети ГУЛАГа*, Moscow 2002 p. 118.
[109] GANO f. r-895, op. 2, delo 4, L. 11-13.
[110] Vilenskii et al, *Дети ГУЛАГа*, Moscow 2002 p. 118.
[111] Interview, 5 September 2003.

Mechanical College. I relished the work. I was over the moon; before the host of fellow students I was no longer a special migrant, though I never forgot that unique label; I was now one of the team, with equal rights. I joined the trade union almost at the start of the Academic year, and then I joined the Young Communist League. I did this for the purpose of entering the college and to distance myself even further from being a special migrant, to consolidate my equal rights".[112] It was, however, not his parents he turned away from, but the label of being a "special migrant". This might be seen as his way of addressing a darker part of a personal past, which in reality meant denouncing the way his parents and grandparents traditionally had lived. Likewise, when Anatolii Dmitrevich remembers that while applying for the Komsomol in 1940, he was expected to denounce his grandfather as a "kulak", he immediately focuses on two aspects that had disqualified his application: firstly that he failed to denounce his father, and secondly that his application was rejected due to this failure.[113] This did not prevent him from a career in the Red Army, like many other former kulak children. In a letter by Fegon Sedorovich it is interesting that his brothers fought on the Soviet side during the Second World War and protected their motherland (that is the Soviet Union).[114] The conscription of kulak children in the Red Army was highlighted by Soviet historians, who used it as an argument for the success of re-educating former "enemies". The story of Major Davydov is significant, as it was a text book of how a former enemy child was transformed into "Hero of the Soviet Union".[115] Like other Soviet citizens, kulak children were also affected by public discourse, and would hide their true identity as a survival strategy of surviving. The kulak daughter Tatiana Ivanovna even went as far as admitting that she had shed a tear when the news about Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 was released – in other words, that she actually had emotions in connection to him, who, in a figurative sense, had mistreated her parents.[116] The interesting aspect about this is that kulak children were aware of their being part of public discourse, but they were not, or only rarely, explicit about the price of being so in the personal narratives, that is they had to denounce their upbringing and adapt the Soviet way of life.

Analysing the personal memory is a matter of entering a "jungle". It is uncertain as to what the narrators are prepared to share. Therefore, it is also difficult to decide whether this aspect of denouncing kulak parents is toned-down. One possibility may be that none of the participants of

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[112] Olga Litvinenko and James Riordan, *Memories of the Dispossessed. Descendants of Kulak Families Tell Their Stories*, Nottingham 1998 p. 50.
[113] Interview, 17 August 2003.
[114] GANO V-66/31.01.95.
[115] Finarov, A.P., "К Вопросу о ликвидации кулачество как класса и судьбе бывших кулаков в СССР" in *История Советского крестьянства в колхожого строительства в СССР*, Moskva 1963 p. 278.
[116] Interview, 24 August 2003.

this investigation actually denounced their parents, and in the case of Tatiana Ivanovna, she still lived together with her mother – the 97-year-old Agrafena Pevnevna. Although she would pick on her mother, as daughters tend to do, she did have emotional feelings for her mother and to some extent, protected her. When her mother had to rest during her interview, the interviewer suggested that it had to be difficult to recall every detail, of which Tatiana Ivanovna responded: "she remembers everything – I remember everything".[117] In other words, reassuring the interviewer and the outside world that there was nothing wrong with either her or her mother. But, living together in old age is not the same as to say that, at some stage, they had not been separated either emotionally or physically. Anatolii Dmitrevich indicated that the children knew it was the price they had to pay in order to be re-included in society when he told about how he denounced his grandfather as "kulak" in the application for the Komsomol. This leads to a second perhaps more plausible reason that kulak children preferred to forget that their extreme experiences in Narym krai had forced them to denounce the older generations. In many cases it was a feeling of being torn and deprived of the right to continue their way of life. As a grandchild of a "kulak", Irina Ch., argued: "During the collectivisation years, the Communist regime eliminated the entire class of proprietors and severed all generational ties. It broke all labour and cultural traditions in terms of a father to son, mother to daughter succession".[118] Instead of focusing on actual inclusion in the Communist transformation of the countryside – as seen in the diary of Stepan Podlubnyi – the kulak children would possibly prefer to accentuate their suffering and victimisation.

## 6.3 Emotions

Many of the experiences of kulak children in the special settlements of Narym krai were overwhelming, when seen from the perspective of outsider, and there is much death, hunger, disease, and uncertainty present in a great number of the narratives. For example, when Vitalii Konstantinovich recalls in his written memory: "My sister Anna was sick with a light inflammation and died in the hospital, where she was buried we don't know. Afterwards my youngest sister, Vera, also died, and since nobody dug a grave, our grandmother wrapped her in a blanket, and brought her to a graveyard and buried her".[119] Aleksei Aleksandrovich also remembers in his account: "Soon we had another misfortune. Vera [his elder sister] starved to death. She also found her place in the

[117] Ibid.
[118] Litvinenko, 1998, p. 94.
[119] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 27 l. 4.

Taiga by the large coniferous trees"[120] Dmitrii Tikhonovich explains in his written story: "They drove us to the settlement of *Bol'shaia Galka* (The big jackdaw), where there were barracks. They packed us in like sardines, we slept on freezing plank beds above the freezing ground. From the iron stove came smoke, children cried, screamed, young people died. We went to Bakchar and an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out..."[121] Kseniia Markovna sums-up: "we starved at home".[122] The question is how do such experiences affect those who lived through them: how do they define them emotionally?

When the participants of the interviews were asked to recollect their childhood in the special settlements, they primarily focused on the physical difficulties of living in the special settlements. Julia Vasilevna claimed: "we had no childhood" and later said: "we were poor. We did not have anything. We had to work very hard. Everything we owned was taken away from us".[123] She was using the lack of material possessions in order to define her misfortune, as this was what she could express. It was an attempt to make the outside world (here the present author) understand the extent of her incomprehensible experiences. Maria Vikentenva, Aleftina Vasilevna and Uliana Petrovna also used the words "trudno" and "tiazhelo" (which both translate as "difficult") whenever they summarised their lives.[124] These adjectives generally refer to physical existences addressing the exhausting aspect of living under such circumstances. Dmitrii Tikhovich additionally lists the rationing of food for those special settlers being sent into to the worksite of the Taiga, which was 280 grams of bread for one person for the whole journey.[125] It is not important, in this context at least, whether this estimation is right or wrong. It is relevant that he uses these numbers to illustrate the difficulties in being a special settler. It might appear as a mechanical reproduction where the events are remembered as facts "450 men and 55 women went to the work site...only 150 men and 52 women returned".[126] However, since existence in the special settlements was exhausting it is no wonder that the physical aspect is so predominant in this account.

Another interesting aspect is the idea of gratitude among many of the narrators, despite their extreme experiences. Anatolii Dmitrevich was asked to sum-up his childhood, and characterise life in the special settlements, to which he responded: "in comparison to others we were relatively privileged. My father was literate and worked at the *komendatura*, and subsequently we received

[120] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 42, l. 4 [My underlining M.K.].
[121] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 50, ll. 2-7.
[122] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 10, l. 6.
[123] Interview, 30 August 2003.
[124] Interviews, 16 and 23 August 2003.
[125] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 50 ll. 2-7.
[126] Ibid.

many rights".[127] When he described the arrival of his family at Narym krai, Anatolii Dmitrevich stated that as his father had contacts he was able to find shelter for the family so they did not, as so many others, sleep on the bare ground. A similar pattern of asserting that others had greater difficulties is found in the accounts of Maria Vikentevna and Uliana Petrovna. Maria Vikentevna explained how she was settled in Tomsk, and therefore did not have to travel – like many others – into the Taiga and Tundra.[128] Uliana Petrovna explained how she was able to earn money, and could supply herself and her family with bread: "therefore we survived, but many around us died and starved".[129] They witnessed a lot of death, hunger and disease, but were, after all, privileged and survived. This may be a sign of gratitude for having come out of the special settlements alive – unlike so many others. It might also be a way of making their experiences of the settlements easier to address, as it was a period in their life, which was permeated by a severe lack of food and an overwhelming frequency of death. Finally, the gratitude might also be a sign of guilt. Anatolii Dmitrevich, Maria Vikentevna and Uliana Petrovna were lucky, unlike so many others, and should not take life for granted.[130] We know from Primo Levi that guilt haunted him, as he felt he was pardoned, in contrary to his fellow inmates in the Nazi concentrations camps who were exterminated in the gas chambers.[131]

The physical aspect of living in the special settlements has been examined, but how are the emotions expressed in both the interviews and the written accounts? Uliana Petrovna addressed the necessity of working in the woods, collecting firewood, smoking out the mosquitoes from their house, cultivating the land, and purchasing livestock. Sad emotions, such as "tears" and "sorrow", were either non-existent or suppressed in the story: when she mentioned the death of her first child, she appeared unaffected and continued to unravel the difficult fact of being in the settlements. Uliana Petrovna was, however, anything but unemotional: When summing-up her experiences she stated: "it was the will of fate" and laughed. In fact laughter was constant in her narrative and "gallows humour" accompanied the most terrible incidents. At one stage she explained how as a young married woman, she worked in the forest industry with her husband. At one point during the

[127] Interview, 17 August 2003.
[128] Interview, 16 August 2003.
[129] Interview, 23 August 2003.
[130] In work done on soldiers, who have having participated in bloodshed, such as the Vietnam veterans, it has been argued that they dwell on the notion of "responsibility" and "guilt": "How did I become this way?" It would there also seem reasonable to assume that "kulak" children, who survived, but nevertheless witnessed death, would ask: "Why did I survive, and not the others?" For more on this idea among soliders see: Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing. Face to Face killing in 20th Century Warfare*, London 1999, p. 206 ff.
[131] Ian Thomson, *Primo Levi*, London 2002, pp. 505-506.

winter she was almost killed by a falling tree, which she could not avoid because of the difficulty of moving in the snow. Her husband immediately went up to her in order to make sure that she was all right, and said that it was too dangerous for her to work in the Taiga. He demanded that she should stay at home and take care of the daily tasks in the house. She related this situation by responding: "but then you'll just kill someone else" and laughed.[132] Laughter, in this context, is an emotional mean that enables people to address the unspeakable. Like when the fool of Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival universe expresses amusement towards the king, he in fact exposes an otherwise unspeakable critique. The world-order in this universe does turn around, and with a grin the poor people are able to make fun of nobility.[133] Although we should be careful of reading too much Bakhtin into the narratives of Uliana Petrovna, it is evident that she uses laughter to verbalise her past, which, seen from an objective perspective, is otherwise difficult for her to address and this is an important ability.

One of the interviewees appears to be different from the rest in how he talks about his childhood: he used stronger vocabulary and even shed tears. This is, Anatolii Dmitrevich, who on two occasions exposed the darker side of the emotional spectrum. At first he talked about the deportation, where a woman threw herself into the water and drowned. Apparently she had been forced (or so went the rumour) to leave behind her four children, which was unbearable for her. At this stage Anatolli Dmitrevich was avoiding directly describing the incident and he was obviously finding it difficult. On mentioning how many children the woman had, he also said that his mother only had three children – information which strictly speaking was useless, but it nevertheless helped him in telling the story. After having talked about this incident, he reflected: "there were many such experiences. I remember it all "uzhasno" (terrible)". The word "uzhasno" ("terrible") is much stronger than "trudno" and "tiazhelo" ("difficult"), and expresses an emotion beyond the physical. Although Anatolii Dmitrevich mentioned the quantity of the daily rationing – which again refers to the physical – and talked about a less painful subject, such as his school, that he was able to verbalise the experience in stronger terms is significant. This was evident the second time he addressed the darker legacies of his childhood, where he actually cried. It was here he talked about the death of his two year old sister, when recalling the scene from the bedroom – his father and himself standing by her bed. In contrast to Uliana Petrovna, Anatolii Dmitrevich dwelt on this moment of death, although he immediately after talked about a less painful subject. It was the

[132] Interview, 23 August 2003.
[133] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Творчество Франсуа Рабле и народная культура средневековья ренессанса*, Moscow 1990 (second edition).

suffering of children that influenced him, and which took him a step further than the rest of the participants in linking his experiences to sad emotions. Whenever he wanted to express sympathy, as in the case of his family's *militsia* neighbour he also used children as an argument: "he was nice, not like any of the other brutal characters, he was good toward us children".[134] The role of the "children" is possibly determined by the fact that they are innocent and easy to sympathise with.

In the written memory, emotions need to be expressed in words, and again there are various examples of how this is done. In contrast to the interviews, tears appear quite often, as when T.A. Akimtsev recalls: " – we children cried day and night, whimpering like hungry kittens"[135] Using the terminology "kitten" the narrator constructs an image of himself and his sisters and brothers as being fragile, vulnerable and weak, only having tears to hold on to. Kseniia Markovna verbalises the emotion through the eyes of her father:" [He] hugged me and cried heavily and we became one..."[136] It would, however, be misleading to conclude that tears appear in all written memories, in fact the narrator often repressed them – the written accounts were also influenced by the "nobody needs your tears" idea. In the tale of Kalashnikov we learn that his father dies, and he states: "I cried for three minutes and that was it!".[137] In addition, Misha Nikolayev says: "A child must have some kind of defence mechanism against things like that [...] No small children grieves for long over parents who have disappeared; at that age wounds inflicted by fate heal quickly".[138] In other words, children do not suffer to the same extent as adults, they adapt quickly and accept their fate. Even while fighting back the tears the emotions appear quite strong. Hava Volovich had a daughter, Eleonora, who was placed in an orphanage so her mother could work: "I saw the nurses waking children up in the mornings. They would force them out of their cold beds with shoves and kicks...pushing the children with their fists and swearing at them roughly, they took off their nightclothes and washed them in ice-cold water. The babies didn't even dare cry. They made little sniffing noises like old men and let out low hoots...On some of my visits I found bruises on her [the baby's] body. I shall never forget how she grabbed my neck with her skinny hands and moaned: "Mama, want home!" She had not forgotten the bug-ridden slum where she first saw the light of day, and where she'd been with her mother all of the time...Little Eleonora, who was now fifteen months old, soon realised her pleas for "home" were in vain. She stopped reaching out for me when

[134] Interview, 17 August 2003.
[135] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 3, l. 1.
[136] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 10, l. 5-6.
[137] GATO f. r-1993, op. 1, d. 17, l. 3.
[138] Misha Nikolayev, "Orphanage" pp. 166-179 in Natasha Perova and Arch Tait (eds.), *ZIP and other Stories. Childhood*, Moscow 1998 p. 169 and p. 173.

I visited her; she would turn away in silence" said Hava Volovich.[139] Even if the girl was not able to communicate verbally, or to have a conversation, she intuitively understood that tears were useless: she even dies in silence, with no one to take care of her. And as the mother stated: "That is the story of how, in giving birth to my only child, I committed the worst crime there is".[140] In this context the lack of tears are perhaps even stronger than constant exposition of tears – as witnessed in T.A Akimtsev's account.

### *6.3.1 Double Identity*

When analysing the emotional connection to the kulak children's past, it is important to remember that these people have a double identity: both as children of dispossessed people, and as Soviet citizens, who managed to establish a career and progress in the Soviet Union. Most of the male participants of the interviews, such as Anatolii Dmitrevich and Georgii Mikhailovich, served in the Red Army, and thereby became protectors of the Soviet state – the same state that had originally excluded them and their families. We have seen that Anatolii Dmitrevich was emotional about his childhood, crying as he recalled the memory of his dying sister and hesitating while relating the painful experience of a woman throwing herself into the water. All of this had an overwhelming impact on Anatolii Dmitrevich as it reminded him that despite a "relatively privileged" childhood, it had, nevertheless, been a traumatic period in his life. However, when recollecting his youth and career in the Red Army, the narrative changed character and became more "a matter of fact". There were no tears and no "I remember it all, it was terrible". Instead he asserted: "and then came the [Second World] War, and – well you know what that is like...".[141] In other words, the narrative changed and this happened within few minutes, indicating that he constantly lived with this doubleness. The childhood experiences were personal, reflecting something that made Anatolii Dmitrevich special and to which he could relate emotionally, while his career as a soldier in the Red Army corresponded to the official version of a prosperous life course, integrating his experiences into the collective Soviet memory of the Great Patriotic War.

The identity of being a soldier in the Red Army was clearly very important in the tale of Georgii Mikhailovich – he talked in depth about the Korean War, which had very little relevance in his recollection of dekulakisation and his years in the orphanages. This can partly be explained by the more recent nature of his recollection about his years of a soldier, as he was older when he served in

[139] Appelbaum, 2003, pp. 320-321.
[140] Ibid. p. 321.
[141] Interview, 17 August 2003.

the army. Another reason for the emphasis on the Korean War might be that the Soviet regime would not have forced him to forget this part of his life, as had occurred in relation to his identity as a child of executed parents. His recollection of the time in the army might also have had a diverting function, indicating that Georgii Mikhailovich used it to avoid more difficult aspects of his childhood. For example, when, asked to recollect painful topics, he delivered a short answer and quickly switched to his experiences as a soldier – even if this was not relevant for the question.[142] Serving the army was a "white sheet" in his life where he distanced himself from his past in the orphanages, and received a legitimate identity as a Soviet citizen. He was clearly aware of the distinct nature of his childhood, which the insistence on achieving official recognition of his past indicates.[143] However, despite this effort to re-establish his childhood the stories about his time as a soldier took over his narrative, whenever asked to recollect the more painful elements of his past.

The double identity thus works differently, depending on the person telling the story. Apart from the differences between Anatolii Dmitrevich and Georgii Mikhailovich the influence of gender also appears as an important factor for the verbalisation of the double identity. Whereas men would talk about both their childhood and the youth as a soldier – tending to dwell with the career in the Red Army – women focused more on their childhood. The female participants would talk about their life after dekulakisation and careers, but would rarely put the same emphasis upon this as the men. This was not only revealed in the actual stories, but was also expressed in the physical appearance of the interviewees as observed during the double interview with Valentin Vasileevich and Julia Vasileevna, who lived together in a small and old Khrushchevian apartment in the suburbs of Novosibirsk. There was nothing particular in the way Julia Vasileevna dressed, while Valentin Vasileevich proudly wore the medals he had earned as a soldier in the Red Army. They also recollected their past differently: Julia Vasileevna concentrated on her childhood, while Valentin Vasileevich tended to focus on both his experiences as a kulak child and as a war veteran.[144] The argument is not that women were more emotional about their childhood than men – the above comparison of the tales of Anatolii Dmitrevich and Uliana Petrovna would in fact suggest the opposite. Instead the assessment is that the male participants constantly switched between the identities of socially-excluded kulak children and socially-included soldiers, while the females appear to have concentrated on the aspect of exclusion and victimisation during their childhood –

[142] Interview, 5 September 2003.
[143] See the article of Viktor Timakov, "Мальчишка из Новосибирска против Российской Федерации" p. 23 in *Честное Слово* № 3 (209), 2001 and the document Комитет государственной безопастности СССР: Управление по Новосибирской области № 4/II-6820 Novosibirsk 20 February 1992.
[144] Interview, 30 August 2003.

perhaps lacking a similar 'ticket of entrance' into Soviet society as the Red Army provided for the men.[145]

### *6.3.2 Emotional knowledge*

This would lead to a more principal discussion: why is it important to analyse the emotional element of the narratives? The argument may be that Western societies reached a stage where it is necessary to insist on coming to terms with a traumatic past to such a level that it appears as if there is an erosion of the concept of "memory". There is an insisting on analysing traumas caused by historical events, which is closely connected to the situation in the late 20th century, where the darker legacies of the past very often were the centre of attention.[146] There also is a risk of watering-down the concept of "memory" by constantly using terms such "facing the past", "coming to terms with the trauma", and "bearing witness of a certain event" – and by an exposition of pain, suffering and tears, whenever extreme events of the past are addressed. By using this moral philosophical approach it is possible, that the academic and analytic skills are ignored, and instead the only thing conducted is a simple and empty calculation of crimes.[147] The state of emotions has drawn quite a significant amount of attention when human participation in a dictatorial regime is discussed: most notably when the emotional intoxication, or the "Rausch", leading to the human support of a certain non-democratic regime is examined.[148] If it can be justified academically that historians detect public enthusiasm present in the Stalinist Soviet Union,[149] it must also be recognised as useful to find the mental settings being caused by the dehumanisation of this regime.

People sense emotionally and this aspect reveals how much the narrator knows about his or her past. "Knowledge" is as Foucault argues "...not a faculty or a universal structure. Even when it uses a certain number of elements that may pass for universals, knowledge will only belong to the order of results, events, effects."[150] A substantial number of misunderstanding, misinterpretation and

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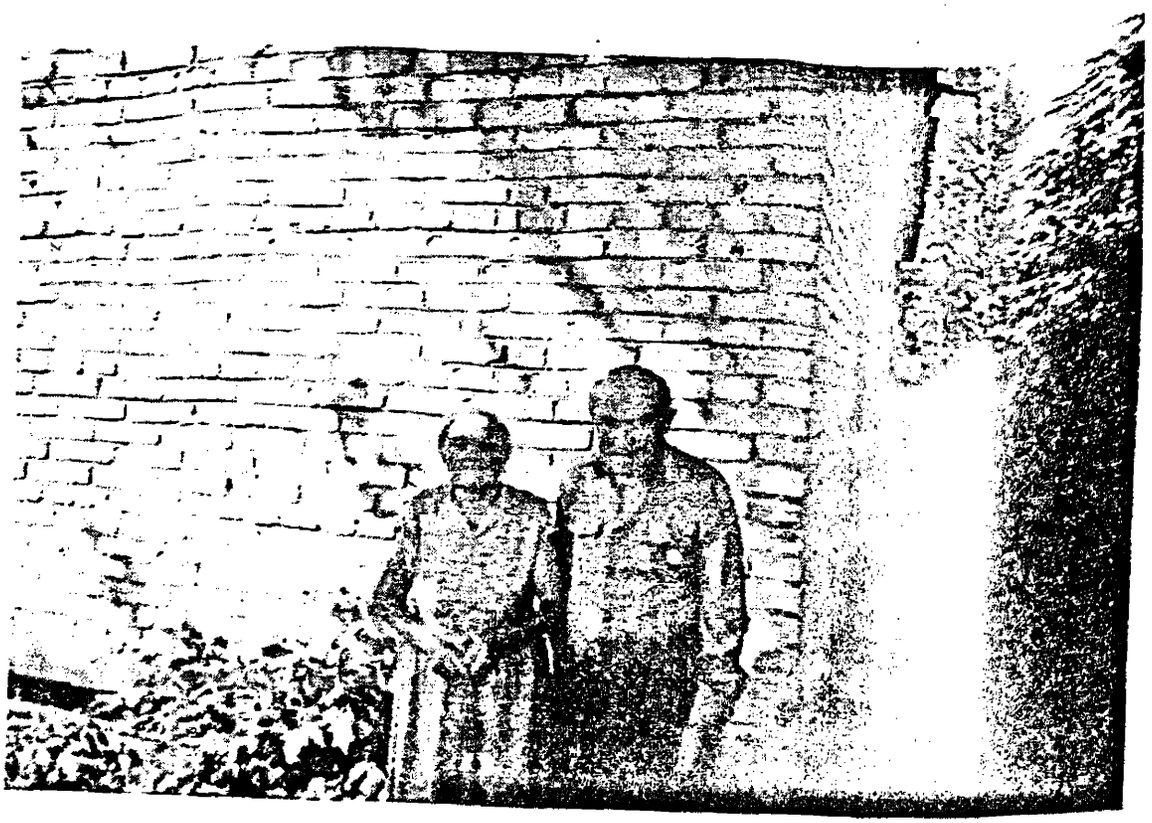
[145] It is generally accepted that women and men tend to recollect differently: Women would often focus on the private and intimate sphere, while men prefers to talk about their career and social life. This differs a bit in the Russian context, as Russian women also will have a tendency to discus their fate in the context of the bigger historical developments. For more on this see: Fitzpatrick, in Fitzpatrick and Slazkine, 2000, p. 3.

[146] Lutz Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität. Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur*, Hamburg 2000, p. 49.
[147] Dietrcuh Beyrau „Die korrekte Moral und die historichen Profession. Ein Kommentar" pp. 254-261 in *Jahrbücher für Geshichte Osteuropas* 47 (1999).
[148] Árpád von Klimó and Malte Rolf, „Rausch und Diktatur" pp. 877-895 in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, band 10, 51. Jahrgang, 2003.
[149] See for example: Wendy Z. Goldmann, *Women at the Gate. Gendering and Industry in Stalinist Russia*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 284-285 or Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, London 1995, pp. 213-14.
[150] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms" pp. 1-89 in James D. Fabion (ed.), *Michel Foucault. Power. The Essential Works 3*, London 2001 p. 14.

(Anatolii Dmitrevich, Interviewed 17 August 2003)

(Aleftina Vasileevna and Maria Vikentevna, Interviewed 16 August 2003)

(Uliana Petrovna, Interviewed 23 August 2003)



(Julia Vasileevna and Valentin Vasileevich, Interviewed 30 August 2003)

(Georgii Mikhailovich, Interviewed 5 September 2003)

(Teodor Karlovich, Interviewed 6 September 2003)

inaccuracy – which can be falsified by historical analysis – appear in personal memory. When working with emotions, however, "knowledge" is not a matter of being right or wrong, but rather of revealing, as the American psychologist Dori Laub, asserts: "...the reality of an unimaginable occurrence."[151] To "know" is, as Primo Levi underlined "not a matter of arriving at the deepest roots of knowing, but just of going down from one level to another, understanding a little bit more than before".[152] If the emotional traces of a certain event – such as dekulakisation – are analysed, it is possible to further understand the human conditions in such extraordinary times. Thus, the exposition of Uliana Petrovna's laughter, Anatolii Dmitrevich's tears and Hava Volovich's suppression of emotions is far more than moralising: it reveals the influence of the Taiga and Tundra on the construction of the narrator's subjectivity.

To sum-up, a substantial number of the narrators have emotional connections to their personal past. It is expressed differently, but they all appear to have senses related to this. Even Teodor Karlovich, who asserted that he could not remember anything, sensed the difficulties of collecting potatoes, obtaining food, and of being excluded as an unwanted element: "we were all considered to be fascists", he stated.[153] They had not forgotten anything, despite the fact that the Soviet regime, forced them to. During the Soviet years, they might have chosen silence as a strategy of surviving, as they knew that the past was something they had to forget. But, when it again became legitimate to recall the human consequences of the past, they easily re-established the senses of their incomprehensible past. It is most probably in this context that we should understand Tatiana Ivanovnas statement: "I remember everything". Even if she could not remember all details, she still has the emotional ties connecting her to that period of her life.

## 6.4 The aftermath

By establishing the emotional "landscape" of the narrator, we arrive at a crucial point in the construction of the personal memory. We can see the long-term impact of the exclusion of kulak children from society: how these experiences affected the kulak children on a longer term. When historians discuss dekulakisation as a historical event, they have to stop at some stage. The years of 1932/33 and later 1937, are in this connection relevant boundaries, as the deportations of "kulaks" declined, as in the first period, or re-escalated, as in the latter period. However, those having lived through these experiences are not able to draw this line. They have to cope with the darker legacies

[151] Laub, "Bearing Witness", 1992, p. 60.
[152] Marco Belpoliti and Robert Gordon, *The Voice of Memory. Interviews 1961-87. Primo Levi*, Cambridge 2001, p. 8.
[153] Interview, 6 September 2003.

of dekulakisation, and integrate it into their daily lives. It is obvious that dekulakisation left emotional and physical scars on the minds and bodies of the "kulaks" and their children. The health of Anna R., for example, was highly affected by the hunger and disease in the special settlements. She had chronic stomach problems, which were not rectified until she had an operation in 1959 (almost thirty years after her return from the special settlements to society).[154] A number of the interviewees, participating in this work, were concerned about not being taken seriously or simply ignored. Tatiana Ivanovna emphasised the remembering of the past and validity of her memory. Julia Vasilevna stated: "you just go home and write, since what you hear is the truth".[155] Georgii Mikhailovich also expressed: "Write what you hear. They will think you are lying, but it is the truth".[156]

The relation between "knowledge" and "historical truth" has been discussed, so it is necessary now to examine why the narrators insist on calling their memory the "truth". On the one hand, it could be detected as being some sort of counteraction to the official Soviet project. The past was to be forgotten, and if necessary by force. Georgii Mikhailovich's story is a good example of how force was used; his identity and link to his parents were simply eradicated. By asserting that he was telling the truth, he emphasised that this intervention had been in vain. He had not forgotten anything. On the other hand, the notion of re-assuring the outside world of the validity of the past evidently is a pattern recognisable from the survivors of other historical tragedies such as the Holocaust. Primo Levi was at one stage supposedly afraid of contracting Alzheimer's disease, as this would take the only thing of value away from him – his memory.[157] There is a Yiddish saying: "you are not dead until you are forgotten" and these kulak children feared being forgotten. To forget would imply that their past, and therefore their identity as victim would vanish.

Georgii Mikhailovich had fought his entire adult life to be recognised as a victim of Soviet repression. He searched for valuable information about himself, his birth, name, fathers name and surname, and he went to court in order to get a legal recognition and official acceptance of his background. Nevertheless, he only partly used these names and dates afterwards, and his recollection about his past would, as aforementioned, tend to be taken over by his recollection of his years as a soldier. This would indicate that while it was important for him to know what had happened, and to understand why he lived his childhood in an orphanages, he would not turn back time and completely reconstruct his past – he only wished to let the world know what his fate was.

[154] Litvinenko, 1998, p. 60.
[155] Interview, 30 August 2003.
[156] Interview, 5 September 2003.
[157] Thomson 2002, p. 348.

It is difficult to explain what drove Georgii Mikhailovich, as it must be seen as an uphill task to fight for such recognition. A possible explanation is that he was seeking revenge over the Soviet system that had subjected him to such inhumane treatment. In other narratives of Soviet citizens a similar wish to let society remember that some actually were dehumanised in the name of history can be detected. Maria Belskaia, one of the many unknown victims of the Stalinist regime, wrote in 1987 a response to an article written by the Party member, Ya. Gamaiun and this was published in the pro-perestroika magazine *Ogonek*. The message in Gamaiun's original article was that time had healed all wounds, that the collectivisation was a necessity and everybody, including the victims, had accepted it. Therefore, it would be harmful to the results already achieved to continue Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost policy. Belskaia believed that this was nonsense and a sign of complete misunderstanding regarding the legacy of human suffering. As she asserted: "Our childhood was poisoned and taken away from us; we did not have a happy youth; in fact, we did not have normal human lives at all."[158] Her response, which was never published in *Ogonek*, was clearly motivated by the idea of not only telling the "truth", but also of explaining to society that some had suffered unjustly. As she ends her story: "I would like for my letter to be published, if only because of all our suffering and underserved torment".[159] In the preface to the English edition of his collections of narratives of surviving GULAG women, Simoen Vilensky defines the testimony of the victims as an informal Nuremberg process. That is, the life stories should serve not only to secure that victims are not forgotten – and thereby "dead" – but also with an aim of having the guilty parties sentenced (if nothing else, then at least morally).[160]

The idea that the personal story can judge the perpetrators might be one very important explanation for Georgii Mikhalovich's urge to find out about his past. However, it is not the whole story, as he appears to be more complex. For one thing, he also placed an emphasis on the many successes of his career in the Red Army, suggesting that he was proud of what he had contributed to the development of Soviet society. Also, he accepted the Soviet terminology used in relation to him and his fellow-sufferer, consequently describing himself as an "enemy" child in opposition to "Soviet children" as such. He coped with the fact that he was a "stranger" – someone who did not really belong. This acceptance of a binary "two camp" view of the world is also recognisable from other types of Soviet life stories: a pro-Soviet versus an anti-Soviet model.[161] Georgii Mikhalovich's need to belong to Soviet society can also explain his desire to find out about his

[158] Maria Belskaia, "Arina's Children" pp. 219-234 in Fitzpatrick and Slezkine, 2000. p. 223.
[159] Ibid., p. 234.
[160] Simoen Vilensky, *Till My Tale is Told. Women's Memoir of the GULAG*, Indianapolis, 1999, pp. XII-XIII.
[161] Fitzpatrick in Fitzpatrick and Slezkine, 2000, p. 14.

childhood. This would imply that his motivation was not only that of anger and revenge, but also a simple wish to find out where he came from.

Another possible explanation should be found the interview of Tatiana Ivanovna and Agrafena Pevnevna.[162] They had lived in silence and uncertainty their whole lives, and on three specific occasions during the interview they mentioned how they had to avoid any attention – including refusing fundings from the Soviet authorities during the 1950s and 1960s, as it indicated that someone would get to know about their past. A life under such circumstances must have created a wish to tell about their fate to the world – especially when it was made possible by the mid-1990s. They had been told for almost fifty years that their past had to be forgotten, but then the regime, which had mistreated them collapsed, and thus a possibility to break the silence arose. Not that people all of a sudden started talking, in fact something would suggest the opposite. A substantial number of former kulak children were still aware of the danger of being recognised. Furthermore, they would also be modest about the value of their testimony, as they had only had limited education, and thus their statement would be communicated in a very simplistic way. M.F. Abramenko finished his written memory with the following sentence: "You have to excuse me for my writing, but it is all true".[163] This suggests that even if Abramenko thought his writing was incomplete, he had an urge to break the silence after so many years.

### *6.4.1 Did everyone suffer?*

Why should we remember the fate of kulak children? Is it any different from the experiences of other groups in the Soviet Union? The editor of *Novy Mir*, Aleksandr Tvardovskii, described the dilemma in the following way:

> "By Right of Memory":
>
> And fate made everybody equal
> Outside the limits of the law
> Son of a kulak or Red commander
> Son of a priest or commissar...
>
> Here classes were all equalized,

[162] Ibid.
[163] GATO, f. r-1993, op. 1, delo 1, l. 3.

All men were brothers, camp mates all,

Branded as traitors every one...

(source, Anne Appelbaum, *Gulag. A History*, London 2003 p. xv)

From Tvardovskii's perspective everybody was equal, even the Red commandant and commissar were victimised by their experiences: they were brothers, camp mates and traitors. One might add that all Soviet citizens, whether they lived in the special settlements of Narym, Northern Russia, Kazakhstan and the Urals, or in a Ukrainian or Russian village or town, were ravaged by starvation as noted above.[164] The 20th century was an extreme century with two devastating world wars, the October Revolution, a Civil War between the "Red" and the "Whites", famine, restrictive anti-class policy, massive peasant rebellions, forced collectivisation, political purges, discrimination of political, social and ethnic minorities and many other major events.[165] The list has almost no end, and even cautious historians accept that at least ten million died in peacetime alone during the construction of the Soviet Union.[166] The culture of suffering is in this context important, as the conservative intellectual Feodor Dostoevsky puts it, "Russians need to suffer".[167] It is traditionally understood by Russian intellectuals to be an integrated part of the Russian national character, or *Русская душа* (the Russian soul), to be subordinated to suffering. It is, a simplistic understanding of the Russian people's psychological map, but the idea of being different, unique, tormented, devastated, subdued by pain, enslaved, and suffering, permeates the cultural production of Russia and the Soviet Union. This pain and suffering is dominating in the literary work of Vasilii Grossman, Aleksandr Blok, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. There is a tendency among Russians to subordinate or at least dwell on the pain when they are defining themselves.[168]

Similarities and differences between the experiences of kulak children and others have already been discussed in the chapter on the living conditions, where it was asserted that despite remarkable similarities, there are substantial differences. The memory of the long lasting and exhausting transports into the Siberian Taiga and Tundra on foot, train and by riverboat that were not intended for human transportation. This was beyond normality, even in Soviet society. The state intrusion in identity shaping, as most completely witnessed by Georgii Mikhailovich was significantly different

[164] Catherine Marridale, *Night of Stone. Death and Memory in Russia*, London 2000 p. 198.
[165] Eric Hobsbawm defines the 20th Century as such as the age of extremes, although he neglects to discuss the full extent of the experiences in the Soviet Union – see: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extreme. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, London 1994.
[166] R.W. Davies, *Soviet economic development from Lenin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge 1998, p. 2.
[167] Rancour-Laferrier, 1995, p. 2.
[168] Ibid, pp. 3-17.

from standard procedures. The mere fact of being forced to forget or denounce family ties, and thus the past, was also different from experiences of an ordinary peasant child, who stayed behind in the Ukrainian villages as son or daughter of a *kolkhoznik*. This is far more than an eager dwelling on suffering, pain and enslavement, this was a human tragedy caused by a political ambition to change Soviet society. Kulak children – even those who achieved a significant advancement in society – were after all *strangers* of Soviet society. The large majority of kulak children had to live in silence, hiding their identity and hoping that the regime would not recommence the anti-kulak campaigns – something they could not be certain of – based on the extreme existence in the special settlement of Narym krai. The lives of former kulak children would afterwards, until Stalin's death in 1953 and even until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, be shadowed by uncertainty. It was anything but an ordinary life these former kulak children had lived, and therefore testimonies of kulak children add vital and unique elements to our comprehension of the nature of the Stalinist regime. By examining the testimonies of kulak children the long term impact of this dehumanisation was analysed and traced. Although kulak children were part of Soviet society, and even later made a career for themselves, what they look back on was death, hunger, disease and humiliation. The bodies and minds of kulak children were fundamentally changed by the massive social and political experiment termed as the forced collectivisation and dekulakisation. A historian can never fully comprehend this. However, by accepting and acknowledging the value of these narratives, a useful way to understand a little bit more can be found: the cold façade of the written source and the statistical material is penetrated, and consequently we can recognize that ordinary and innocent people lived in Soviet society and were dehumanised not because of something they had done, but because they belonged to an unwanted group.

# 7. Conclusion

"Tell me Misha [the Russian nickname for Michael] what do your people know about this Genocide?" The author had been interviewing Anatolii Dmitrevich for an hour, and afterwards, as appears to be a Russian tradition, we sat down at the kitchen table ate, drank and talked. It was at this pointed the question was raised. Taken by surprise the answer was "I guess very little!" It is true that much literature has been published about the turmoil in the Soviet countryside and society in the 1930s; however, this is mostly scholarly work and consequently primarily aimed at a specific professional audience. A collective awareness about the fate of among others the kulak children is scarce in the Western public.[1] The discussion of Soviet history has often been related to "terminologies", such as whether the political repression of the Soviet population really qualifies to be called "Genocide". Such discussion addresses the nature of the exiting conventions – in this case the UN Convention on Genocide – and whether it applied to the Soviet case.[2] Also scholars discuss whether collectivisation was motivated by economics or politics, and thereby whether or not the campaign was necessary. This is difficult to comprehend for a lay person, since it often is a debate about definitions, details and nuances. As a Danish journalist once said, while this author strove to elaborate on the different position in Soviet history: "are you not being terribly academic now?" It was in the light of this, that the answer to Anatolii Dmitrevich was given. Of course, we know more, but the human consequence of dekulakisation still appears to be incomprehensible for many in the West. Anatolii Dmitrevich was apparently not satisfied with the answer, and continued the discussion by asking: "But was Maria Federovna[3] not Danish?" When he received a positive response he reacted: "why then do your people know so little about our fate?"

Part of the aim of this project has been to enlarge our knowledge about the human aspect of a tragic event such as dekulakisation – this was, after all, a physical and forceful relocation of ordinary human beings, who were punished not for what they had done, but simply because they belonged to an undesired group. By focusing on a small and often neglected group of these victims

[1] Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan define the difference between history writing and memory as: "Collective memory is not what historians say about the past [...] Collective remembrance is a set of acts which go beyond the limits of the professional. These acts may draw from professional history, but they do not depend on it."See Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, "Setting the framework"pp. 6-39 in Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (ed.) *War and Remembranc in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge 2000, p. 8.

[2] See: Jens Mecklenburg and Wolfgang Wippermann (eds.): *"Roter Holocaust"? Kritik des Schwarzbuchs des Kommunismus*; Hamburg 1998.

[3] The mother of the last Tsar Nicholai II was the Danish princess Dagma, who, when married to Aleksandr III, changed her name to Maria Federovna. For more on her fate see: Bent Jensen, *Zarmoder blandt zarmordere. Enkekejserinde Dagmar og Danmark 1917-1928*, Copenhagen 1997.

– that is the children – the aim was to expand our conceptualisation of victimisation. Even if the father of the household – or the "man" – was the primary target during these repressive periods, children often comprised the largest number of the deportees: 40% of the dekulakised were children younger than 15 years old. The scope has been to determine the relationship of the Soviet regime and the kulak children, and to discuss whether they were defined as "enemies", "friends" or "strangers" of the revolution. The analysis was divided into four major parts: firstly, the distinction between kulaks and kulak children in the 1930s was discussed, and the development of this was examined until the end of that decade; secondly, there was a focus on the nature of the living conditions, with an attempt to place this in a larger historical context: thirdly, the education of kulak children was analysed, by discussing both on the teaching and the nature of propaganda aimed at them: and fourthly, these children were followed into their old age, in order to analyse their childhood recollections. The core of this discussion has been: why were kulak children victimised and how did it affect them in the long-term?

When discussing the fate of kulak children, we should be aware that many different groups were excluded from Soviet society during the 1920s and 1930s. They included Cossacks, Former people (*Бывший люди*), bourgeois people, NEP-men, priests and many, many more. There were, consequently, different categories of enemy children as well, which logically differed from each other due to their national, ethnic and social composition.[4] There are many similarities in the fate of excluded children, but, of course, also a number of differences. One significant difference would be that kulak child was not part of a national or ethnical group, like Jews, Taters, Volga-Germans and others, but rather a social category existing in many different agricultural areas of the Soviet Union. This would also imply that the Soviet authority had different considerations regarding the treatment of them. A similarity would be that the regime always would be confronted with the fundamental question of how far ideology and political zeal could justify the maltreatment of children. Hence all children underline the paradox between ideology and political practices.

The October Revolution in 1917 affected that a Bolshevik regime rose from the ashes of the old Tsarist Empire with the declared goal of fundamentally changing society. The old regime was conceived as "backward", "old fashioned", "stubborn" and altogether undesirable. Instead "progress", "modernisation" and "enlightenment" were suggested, which also implied that what had been before had to be swept away by revolutionary means – whatever that entailed. Through propaganda, agitation and organisation the new power holders initially believed that it was possible

[4] *For more on enemy children see: Youngok Kang-Bohr, Stalinismus in der ländlichen Provinz. Das Gebeit Voronež 1934-1941*, Essen 2006, p.179ff..

to shape a society, mobilise the population towards a common goal and finally achieve Communism. The approach was "scientific", in the sense that society was conceptualised as a mechanical body that could be adjusted and transformed according to the right "values". Standards for "correct" behaviour were defined, and "incorrectness" emerged as a logical consequence of such a simplistic reflection on the world order. A binary division of society into "backward" or "progressive" materialised. The representatives of the Tsarist regime – most notably the traditionally Russian peasantry – were defined as the ultimate example of this "backwardness". But who classified "backwardness" and decided what "progress" and "modernisation" implied? It was the Bolshevik leadership, and although part of their conception applied to elements of the social construction of agriculture, the fundamental understanding was based on a *misconception*. Lenin and his colleagues were determined to divide the peasantry according to a class distinction, in which poor peasants (bedniaki), middle peasants (seredniaki) and rich peasants (kulaki) comprised the main elements. From this perspective a self-perpetuating exploitative kulak threatened not only the poor peasants, but also the Soviet state by its grain speculation. The kulak was a "miroed" (a "village eater"); he enslaved Soviet society, and therefore had to be attacked by every possible means. As Lenin expressed it in August 1918: "Death to them!"

Some Soviet agronomists, like A. Chayanov, warned against this conception, and argued that the Russian peasantry was not static, divided according to certain Marxist class lines, but was rather an organic body changing constantly depending on the demographic situation of both the family and the local community. Between 80% and 90% of the Russian peasantry was based on a non-wage family economy at the time of the October Revolution. This fundamentally undermined the validity of the Bolshevik comprehension of the countryside. The peasantry was not divided according to fixed social class; instead it was the demographic distinction that determined the various possibilities of an individual peasant. We do not need to be Chayanovites in order to appreciate the fundamental strength of this definition of the social structure of Russian agriculture. By ascribing the peasantry to three different class strata, the Soviet regime neglected this fact, and consequently entered the countryside with a misconception that created massive peasant resistance.

Even if social differences existed in the villages – most notably during the Black Reparation in 1905-07 and 1917, and also during the 1920s – this was not the main reason for the erosion of the countryside – the social collapse of society was a logical consequence of Bolshevik misconception. The Civil War of 1918-21, and the accompanying peasant rebellions, were by no means coincidences. Given that the peasantry was considered "backward" and even "stupid", and that the

most independent and thereby resisting peasants were designated as class enemies and "kulaks", led to scepticism, resulting in a state of civil war between the regime and those in the countryside. The position of Chayanov was legitimate during the 1920s; however, by 1927-28 this had changed significantly. A number of agronomists from the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of RSFSR had been purged, which clearly indicate that the conception of peasantry as an organic non-wage family economy never could be accepted by the Soviet regime. Rather it was essential to detect "kulaks" and liquidate them as a class, and this was formally adopted in January 1930.

The kulak concept existed in pre-revolutionary Russian society, yet they stood outside the local community and worked against the village commune. However, by 1928-29 the detecting of kulaks was random and suggests that the main Soviet aim was finally to liquidate the Tsarist leftovers in Soviet agriculture. The class definition was largely a political construction of the countryside, which cannot explain the full extent of the problems by the end of the 1920s. This can be supported by the massive peasant resistance to the collectivisation process – women who resisted were organised according to their gender rather than their social belonging. This would legitimise that the dekulakisation in reality was a "*depeasentation*". The paradox is that the Soviet state appears to have accepted that the Russian peasantry was a non-wage family economy, even when the regime was most ideological in its collectivisation campaign. It was decided on 30 January 1930 that the whole family – that is the main economical body of the traditional peasant household – had to be liquidated. Given that children and adolescents belonged to the traditional workforce and comprised an important element of it, they were not unaffected by liquidation of the kulak as a class. In the initial turmoil the kulak children were subjected to a devastating dehumanisation, and suffered immensely from this Soviet neglect. Not only did the kulak children comprise a larger proportion than the main target of repression – the kulaks – they were also the first to become sick, starve and die during the deportation and in the special settlements. The demographic situation of those families being submitted to dekulakisation was terrible: infant mortality in these families rose dramatically by 1930-31 as a direct consequence of this repression.

Kulak children were therefore victimised, because the Soviet regime was unclear about their position in Soviet society. Belonging to a kulak household, and thereby comprising elements of the individual kulak peasant's workforce, it seemed only natural to remove the kulak children alongside the families. The Soviet regime discussed the definition of the kulak child throughout the 1930s, but never seemed to come to a final decision. Some kulak children would be expected to possess anti-

Soviet sympathies, especially after having experienced deportation and life in the special settlements. The adolescents, those who were 16 years or older, were automatically considered "socially dangerous". Yet the Soviet state was caught in a deadlock, between on the one hand repressing these children, but on the other portraying Soviet childhood in general as happy. Such reflections commenced by 1933-34, and also involved a calmer line towards kulak children. The restitution of the civic rights by 1934, such as voting rights, in case they had participated in the required education, is one example. The climax of this shift was Stalin's expression from November 1935, and something suggests that at least some kulak children were met positively by the Soviet regime. However, the line of the Soviet state towards right of kulak children to attain a passport remained uncertain and even contradicting – often with specific notation of reservations. This was probably because of the uncertainty regarding the sympathies of the kulak children – could a regime, which was otherwise profound paranoid, really trust children, who were expected to possess elements of a class hostile consciousness? The question was never answered completely, and thus the kulak children became the stranger: both belonging to the public discourse, but at the same treated as carriers of class hostile attitude.

Dekulakisation therefore worked on different levels: one aspect was the expropriation of household effects, economic marginalisation and finally deportation of designated kulaks and their families. Another aspect, which is perhaps as important, was the transformation of kulak children in schools. This changed throughout the 1930s, yet in its initial phase the ambition evidently was to marginalise also the kulak children in society. Despite a debate on this issue, between the NKPros and the Komsomol in 1928-29, the most immediate consequence of this was a significant exclusion of kulak children from the schools and institutions of higher education by 1929. Kaganovich believed this was a useful instrument in repressing the kulaks, which was voiced during the institutionalisation of the Ural-Siberian method by March 1929. This was seen to be an efficient measure to undermine the social capital of the kulaks, to minimise their influence on future development, or simply to "tear out the evil by the roots". The distinction between kulaks and their children was non-existent until at least January-February 1930. It changed later on, especially after kulak families were deported, when kulak children in fact were offered education. However, the aim of minimising the influence of the kulaks on the development remained: the traditional religious peasant upbringing had to be replaced by political education and indoctrination; the restitution of the civic rights of kulak children depended on their willingness to participate in public education; they had limited possibilities to leave the areas of the special settlements, despite the

restitution of voting rights and the issuing of passports to them; and kulak children had to denounce the class hostility of their parents in order to be accepted by the regime. Kulak children had to be turned into small "Pavlik Morozovs" – that is heroic sons of the fatherland reporting on the class hostile actions of their fathers. Whether they actually believed this, and subsequently distanced themselves permanently from their parents, is debateable, yet their life chances often forced them to at least pretend that they detested the class hostility of their fathers especially. And thus, dekulakisation had the long-term impact that the different generations had been turned against each other.

It may be that the Soviet regime adapted a softer line towards the kulak children, at least by 1934, when the decision to restitute their civic rights was approved. And it is also important to mention that the living conditions of the deported and especially the kulak children seem to have stabilised by1935. Yet the impact of the preceding period from 1929 to 1933 was so devastating that the negative influence was impossible to correct. Firstly, the demographic decline is of great importance, as so many children, who officially were offered the chance of integration into the generation of the "happy childhood", died as a direct result of this policy. Secondly, it is relevant to remember that a significant number of these children and adolescents had been excluded from schools and institutions of higher education because of their family ties. In the longer term, this also minimised their number in the different spheres of society. Thirdly, we should recall that a substantial number of kulak children became orphans as a consequence of the death of their parents. Fourthly, the aim of forcing these children to forget their parents has a great significance for our understanding of the nature of the public upbringing of kulak children. Fifthly, the criminalisation of kulak children during their stay in the orphanages of the special settlements is important, as it affected their relation to the Soviet state, which was tremendously concerned about the social disorder this constituted. The long term impact of this would be a distinct scepticism which followed kulak children throughout their entire life. Sixthly, we shall also remember that these children always, even when they returned to society, gained work, and an education, still had to avoid too much attention. The majority of these children never spoke of their past because it had too many negative implications. They never forgot about their experiences, but kulak children knew that it was crucial to keep a very low profile. It is important to also remember that so many families were dissolved and many children abandoned as a direct result of dekulakisation. The immeasurable psychological impact of dekulakisation was immense on these children, and consequently a majority of them looked back on the dehumanisation, discrimination and exclusion, when they were

older and asked to recollect their childhood. Only rarely could they appreciate the possibilities given to them by the Soviet regime.

From these points the liquidation of the kulaks as a class was a success – these peasants, stigmatised as enemies of the people and vicious kulaks, were effectively marginalised. They never again had an opportunity to influence the development of society. They rarely had any influence on their children, and thus remained "outcast" not only in relation to society but in relation to everyone else – including their own intimate sphere. This was already a fact by 1934/35, and therefore the Stalinist regime could reproach the kulak children without any danger of losing control of the development. It was a give and take tactic, depending on the situation and the strength of the designated enemies the regime would either tighten or loosen its grip on society. These children were treated like their parents, at least in the initial phase, yet the regime would also change its policy, when it had defeated the kulak parents. This battle was won in 1935, and Stalin could claim – after having dismantled the kulak families – that "a son does not answer for his father". Even if such statement was controversial, and often contradicted by the political practices, it implied a redefinition of the approach to kulak children.

Why did Anatolii Dmitrevich describe his experiences as genocide? The question appears to provoke an enormous debate, and is often associated with the nature of the excessive death of at least 10 million Soviet citizens from 1926-39. Was it intentional, or rather an outcome of unintended and uncontrollable elements? It may be that the experiences of Anatolii Dmitrevich from a historical point of view cannot qualify as being conventional "genocide", but it is understandable why he associated his experiences with a political term that has often been used in public during the late 20th century. He was an eyewitness of "...an unimaginable occurrence", and used a terminology that served to explain what is incomprehensible for an audience – who have not lived through such degrading experiences. And, from this perspective his observation qualifies; he had as a child been caught in the "twilight zone" between emotional connections to his parents/grandparents, and to the obligation he as a Soviet citizen had to society in order to survive. He was a stranger of Soviet society, and knew that survival was a matter of adjusting to the requirements of the state. The result of the political repression of his family was that it never returned to the village of origin, and thus his kin had vanished from this geographical area. They may not have been subjected to "genocide" strictly speaking, but they had, nonetheless, been uprooted and excluded from society because of the dekulakisation policy.

Therefore, it is highly plausible that Anatolii Dmitrevich used the term of "genocide" in order to make the world understand what it was like to be dehumanised. He was, as so many other kulak children, insisting on telling the world about his fate – about a tragedy he believed explained a lot about the country he grew up in. This was in part motivated by a wish to get revenge over the "system", who treated him and his family unjustly – who had taken the land away from the people that loved the land (that is his grandfather). In part, he believed that he was breaking years of silence, which had been caused by a distinct ideology of deny dominating the discourse of the Soviet Union. The tears he had shed over his dying sister mattered, and he wanted to share it with the world. His memory would make sure that she was never forgotten – and thus that so many others of his generation had not died in vain. His experiences, as the experiences of thousands of kulak children, had shaped a man, who throughout his entire life had done his duty (served in the Red Army and worked in the Soviet Union), but who nonetheless had been a "stranger". Always living between the including "us" – that is the Soviet citizens – and the excluding "they" – that is the designated "kulaks". To survive in such a country, Anatolii Dmitrievich had to be silent – but silence had not made him forget. This was the story of a man, who had lived an anonymous life, but who at the same time had lived through the extreme chapters of the turbulent history of his country. Certainly, he was unfortunate and naturally he felt guilt of surviving the chaos deportation, but he was also proud that he, through his story, once and for all could tell the world: "I survived this "genocide"". This was the long-term impact on kulak children. They had been offered education, work, career, but they would often identify themselves with their excluded parents.

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| 2 | Aleftina Vasileevna (1923) | 16 August 2003 |
| 3 | Anatolii Dmitrevich (1924) | 17 August 2003 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Uliana Petrovna (1920) | 23 August 2003 |
| 5 | Tatiana Ivanovna (1934) | 24 August 2003 |
| 6 | Agrafena Alekseevna (1906) | 24 August 2003 |
| 7 | Valentin Vasileevich (1925) | 30 August 2003 |
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